

AWAKENING THE SPIRITUAL:
JAMES TURRELL AND QUAKER PRACTICE

by

LISE KJAER

A dissertation submitted to the Graduate Faculty
in Art History in partial fulfillment of the
requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
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Abstract

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by

Lise Kjaer

This dissertation examines the works of James Turrell (b. 1942, Pasadena, California) in relation to his interest in Quakerism. Turrell was born and raised as a Quaker, and has within the past decade renewed his interest and involvement with Quakerism. However, elements of his work throughout his career, can be tied to his Quaker experience, both philosophically and visually.

Turrell's light installations aim to awaken a perceptual experience of light inside the viewer. While this concept developed through his interest in phenomenology and environmental psychology, it is also tied to Quaker theology and the Quaker founder George Fox's suggestions of seeking a spiritual "light within." Additionally, Turrell's series of "skyspaces," for example, which include white interior spaces with a row of benches mounted to the walls, respond visually to the aesthetics of traditional Quaker Meeting Houses. Fox's

suggestion of the church to be thought of as a group of individuals, rather than as an elaborate architectural structure, is directly visible here. Fox recommended "meetings" to take place in the open air or, if necessary, in a pre-existing building, ship, or barn, stripped of any unnecessary adornments. Turrell's series of outdoor pieces respond to Fox's suggestion of seeking the light as an experience in relation to the light outside. His series of "Spiritual Spaces" most directly reflect his Quaker upbringing, especially the Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas, which he designed according to Quaker tenets and tradition.

Turrell's experience of imprisonment as an effect of his work as a draft counselor in the Quaker community, influenced him in his series of "Perceptual Spaces." Seeking refuge from violence and rape, Turrell opted for solitary confinement, a dark and uncomfortable space in which one could neither fully stand up, nor lie down. It was in this darkened space that Turrell realized the mind experiences light even in darkness, and is capable of mentally expanding a narrow enclosure. The "Perceptual Cells" reflect this biographical experience, but they can also be seen in the Quaker context of non-violent resistance to violence and powers of authority.

Turrell's work responds to the Quaker allegory of a soul which inhabits a body. The Quakers believe in the

divine light as an omnipresence existing in the entire universe as well as inside any human being. Turrell's goals, as he has often stated, are to create opportunities for viewers to experience the light inside as reflected in the light outside, as they form their own "experience of soul." In this context, Turrell's works can be considered a contemporary expression of a multi-faceted and open-ended Quaker practice, intended to bring the "cosmos closer."

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such challenging and inspirational works that allow for us, as viewers, to experience light in a both real and very profound way.

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I'm interested in the idea of
space inside and space outside,
and the allegory of how soul
inhabits body but has a life outside it.¹
James Turrell

Introduction

James Turrell (b. 1943, Pasadena, CA) is best known for his light installations that aim to challenge a viewer's perception in order to generate a new sense of self-awareness. Raised as a Quaker, Turrell has within the past decade largely renewed his involvement with the Quaker community and Quaker practice. This dissertation will analyze and demonstrate the influence of Quaker philosophy and aesthetics on Turrell, and argue that elements of his work throughout his career can be tied to his Quaker experience, both philosophically and visually. A detailed analysis of his light and perception-based installations discussed in relation to Quaker theology and material culture will make several contributions to the field. It

¹James Turrell, interview by Robert Baldridge, no date listed, Beliefnet, www.beliefnet.com/story/73/story_7337.html, accessed

will propose a new reading of Turrell by demonstrating the links between Quakerism and the artist's work, using biography as a key. An analysis of Turrell's work in relation to Quaker beliefs will serve to situate his work in a current debate among scholars about Quaker aesthetics. It will also contribute to the growing literature on modern art and spirituality, which has met with some critical resistance throughout the twentieth century.

The Premise of James Turrell's Work

James Turrell's installation pieces engage both physiological and psychological aspects of viewing and perception as, on the one hand, an optical phenomenon encountered through the eye, and on the other, a subjectively processed and emotional experience. The optical and the subjectively processed encounter, of course, intertwine in the individual's experience of the perceived circumstance. Presenting the viewer with a specific situation in which light is the predominant component, the work prompts a series of questions pertaining to what it is we see and what it is we experience. It is this moment of recognizing one's own perception that is important to Turrell, who explains it simply as: "My desire is to set up

16 July 2004. Baldrige is a photographer and a Quaker who attends the 15th St. Meeting House, Manhattan, New York.

a situation to which I take you and let you see. It becomes your experience."²

Turrell's series of "Skyspaces" (1969 to the present), (fig. 1), for example, set out to do exactly that. The series consists of both freestanding structures and structures within existing buildings. All involve white interior spaces and contain a row of benches attached to the walls with a large cut in the ceiling opening directly to the sky. The artificial light positioned inside the room blends with the exterior natural light from the "window" in the ceiling. This fusion of the two different light sources creates a distinct and awakening perceptual experience. The viewer's eyes start to slowly flicker back and forth between the inside and the outside environment and, as the light outside begins to change, the eyes continue to gradually "zoom" in and out, similar to an aperture or camera lens placed on a slow auto focus. Viewing the piece is thus not as much a question of "looking at," as it is a question of "looking in" to the senses, awakening the individual's awareness of seeing.

Turrell is perhaps best known for his long-term project *The Roden Crater* (1974 to the present). Once finalized, the viewers will eventually be able to encounter a number of

²James Turrell, "Interview with James Turrell," Julia Brown, ed. *Occluded Front, James Turrell*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 1985), 22. Julia Brown was married to

light installations inside the crater. Each of the built-in underground chambers will feature light drawn into the dark rooms from the outside (discussed in Chapter 4).

Encounters with Turrell's work may at times lead to more evocative sensations of something dreamlike, and even spiritual in nature. The experiential "dialog" between the interior and exterior space, as described in Turrell's statement above (and directly experienced inside one of the "Skyspaces"), I suggest, relates to Turrell's Quaker practice and his interest in the idea of space inside and space outside--the Quaker allegory of how the soul inhabits the body but has a life outside it. The underlying goal in Turrell's work is not only to guide us to experience a new sensation within our bodies, but also a new awareness of the body's relation to its immediate environment, ultimately the universe, and infinite space. Such experiences, I argue, parallel the spiritual relations Quakers may experience during "Meeting."³

Turrell in 1985 and had two children with him. The two divorced in 1995.

³The word "meeting" is capitalized when referencing a spiritual gathering as common practice in Quaker literature.

Quakerism - A Brief History

It is this spiritual self-awareness encountered while experiencing light that, in Turrell's case, is tied to Quakerism. Quakerism emerged in England in the 1650s as a critique of the Anglican Church, advocating a reform by which individual experience of God became the main focus.⁴ Its founder, George Fox (1624-1691), encouraged his followers to seek unity with God in silence by looking inside, searching for "the inward light." (For a list of Quaker terminology, see Appendix 1.) The experience of God did not need any mediation by a priest, clergy or other authorities. According to Fox, the experience of God would be available to all people. He suggested that the church be thought of as a group of individuals, rather than as an elaborate architectural structure, and recommended "Meetings" in the open air, or, if necessary, in a pre-existing building, ship, barn, etcetera.

The seventeenth century "Meetings" were therefore gatherings of people interested in "seeking the light"; in fact Quakers were also initially called "Children of Light" and "Seekers of Truth." Founding the "Society of Friends," Quakers aimed to come together in weekly "Meetings" for worship, a format that continues to be practiced today and

⁴Hugh Barbour and J. William Frost, *The Quakers* (London, New York, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1988).

is widely accepted among Quakers as the Friends' way to seek God.⁵ The congregation meets for the most part for an hour on Sundays and worships in silence. Such "Meetings" are called "unprogrammed Meetings." If a member feels "moved" to speak, he or she stands up and conveys a statement called a "leading." Thought to derive directly from the divine, "leadings" need to be shared with others. Following a period of time in silence, another person in the congregation may respond, add to, or convey an entirely different message. It is also possible that nobody speaks and the "Meeting" remains silent for the entire hour.⁶

Typically, Quakers additionally organize monthly "Meetings for Worship with a Concern for Business." These Meetings serve to discuss current issues with decisions made by consensus based on a communal discovery of the "truth," which the congregation derives at following the individuals' "leadings" from God.

The focus in traditional Quaker Meeting Houses is individual perception and response.⁷ There is no priest, no altar, and no image to worship. The aesthetics of the Quaker Meeting Houses follow the credo set from the beginning by George Fox. To create an environment fostering the experience of "seeking the Light Within," Fox proposed that

⁵Ibid., 5.

⁶Ibid., 4.

Quakers strip their Meeting Houses of any distracting visual details, painting the walls white with lime and sand,⁸ and, preferably, "unthatching" the roof with windows kept simple, as rectangular openings connecting the individual to the nature outside.⁹ Alternatively, a Meeting could also be held in the outdoors as a way of creating a better union with the exterior world, enabling the believer to get in touch with the spirit and the "light."

The Quaker "testimonies" were laid down from the beginning, though Quakers emphasize that they change and evolve over time. The most common ones pertain to peace, equality, integrity and simplicity.¹⁰ As conscientious objectors, the Quakers adhere to the early Quakers' Peace Testimony, "A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers" (1660), to the English King Charles II. Prompted by an armed revolt by religious radicals in London, January 1661, the Society of Friends declared:

⁷"Quaker Meeting House" is capitalized here and throughout the dissertation, following general Quaker practice.

⁸Catherine Lavoie, "Quaker Beliefs and Practices and the Eighteenth-Century Development of the Friends Meeting House in the Delaware Valley" in Emma Jones Lapsansky and Anne A. Verplanck, eds., *Quaker Aesthetics, Reflections on a Quaker Ethic in American Design and Consumption* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2003), 159.

⁹Don Yoder, "The Meeting House and the Quaker Community" (paper presented at the symposium "Silent Witness: Quaker Meeting Houses in the Delaware Valley, 1695 to the Present," organized by the Friends' committee Historic American Buildings Survey Recording of Friends Meeting Houses Within the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, September 21, 2002).

We utterly deny all outward wars and strife and fightings with outward weapons, for any end or under any pretence whatsoever. And this is our testimony to the whole world. [...] The spirit of Christ, by which we are guided, is not changeable, so as once to command us from a thing as evil and again to move unto it; and we do certainly know, and so testify to the world, that the spirit of Christ, which leads us into all Truth, will never move us to fight any war against any man with outward weapons, neither for the kingdom of Christ, nor for the kingdoms of this world.¹¹

The seventeenth-century "Peace Testimony" is still one of the most important historical events in Quaker history and its message of non-violence and peace continues to inspire contemporary Quaker groups working for peace.¹²

The "Testimony of Equality" concerns the Quaker tenet that all people are created equally as God's children. Quakers believe that all beings embody the same divine spark of light, regardless of gender, race, illnesses, and past doings. It is therefore of importance to treat every man or woman, black or white, mentally ill or well, prisoner or free, with the same integrity and respect as one treats oneself. The "Testimony of Integrity" concerns the importance of seeking, speaking, and living the truth, that

¹⁰Barbour and Frost, 4.

¹¹"A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people, called Quakers," 1660, rpt. John L. Nickalls, ed., *The Journal of George Fox* (Philadelphia: Religious Society of Friends, 1997), 399-400.

¹²Barbour and Frost, 9.

is: the importance of being true to God, true to oneself, and true to others.¹³

Finally, the "Testimony of Simplicity" concerns the idea of living a life in simplicity, seeking a life in connection with God, rather than aiming for material possessions and monetary wealth. A life in simplicity involves simplicity in speech, dress code (plain dress), and general lifestyle.¹⁴ John Pushon's Quaker history, tellingly entitled simply *Portrait in Grey* (1980), explains how the Quakers "proclaim a great message, yet do it in curiously muted tones." He describes how George Fox's four years of wandering through England, Scotland, and Ireland in the seventeenth century, taught him how worldly things didn't guarantee his own discoveries of the truth. On the contrary, they were somewhat distracting. The only path to salvation, according to Fox, emerged through an inward submission to God.¹⁵

The first generations of Quakers were skeptical about anything material that could possibly distract them from experiencing the "light within." They believed expensive dresses and costumes were to be avoided, as were jewelry, elaborate hairstyles, and bright colors. In her essay "The Aesthetics of Absence: Quaker Women's Plain Dress in the

¹³Ibid., 41-42.

¹⁴Ibid., 44-45.

¹⁵John Pushon, *Portrait in Grey: A Short History of the Quakers* (London: Quaker Home Service, 1980), 46.

Delaware Valley, 1790-1990," art historian Mary Anne Caton points to the *Five Rules of Discipline* issued between 1682 and 1711 by the Philadelphia Yearly Meeting, as a source of the most specific guidelines for plain clothing. *The Rules of Discipline* urged Friends to avoid "superfluity in apparel." Buttons, ribbons, long sleeves, patterns, stripes, flowers, and scarves were to be avoided in order to steer clear of distractions from the essential: seeking the truth.¹⁶

Increasingly, the colors of clothing worn by Quakers turned dark, mute, and grey with no ornamentation, laces, or decorative details. Despite the fact that the majority of Quakers followed these rules, there were still discussions about wearing the plain dress. Well into her eighties, Fox's wife Margaret Fell Fox (1614-1702), for example, found it much too austere and criticized this new direction as she questioned why "we must look at no colors, nor make anything that is changeable colors as the hills are, nor sell them nor wear them. But we must all be in one dress, and one color. This is a silly poor Gospel."¹⁷ Although Margaret Fell Fox was a highly respected individual among Quakers at the time, her critique on this issue was not strong enough

¹⁶Mary Anne Caton, "The Aesthetics of Absence: Quaker Women's Plain Dress in the Delaware Valley, 1790-1990," in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 248.

¹⁷Hugh Barbour, ed., *Margaret Fell Speaking* (Wallingford, Pa.: Pendle Hill, 1976), 32, rpt. Thomas D. Hamm, *The Transformation*

to prompt a change and Quakers largely continued to turn to the muted grey tones, plain dress, bonnet, and hat.¹⁸

A Brief History of Quakerism in the U.S.

Quakerism came to the U.S. in the mid-seventeenth century. Following persecution in England and Ireland, Quakers decided to flee these countries to escape discrimination and harassment by traveling west to colonial America in search of a better life. Some met new persecution in New England, and New Amsterdam (Long Island, New York), but others found solace in groups in colonies that were more tolerant towards their religious beliefs (Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island). Perhaps the safest haven was Pennsylvania, formed by the Quaker pacifist William Penn in 1681. Penn implemented a system of governance by elected representatives of the people, characterized by freedom of religion, and fair trials. Quakers often, until this day, think of this democratic concept as having provided a model for what was later to become the American constitution.¹⁹ The freedom of religion in Pennsylvania attracted not only English, Welsh, German and Dutch Quakers to the colony, but also Huguenots (French

of American Quakerism, The Quakers in America (New York: Columbia University, 2003), 102.

¹⁸Hamm, 102.

¹⁹Ibid., 27-29.

Protestants), Mennonites, Amish, Lutherans from Catholic German states, and Jews.

Important to Pennsylvania's Quaker legacy are Penn's peaceful treaties with the Native Americans, as for example the Leni-Lenape nation, depicted in the Quaker Benjamin West's historical painting *Penn's Treaty with the Indians* (1771-1772) (fig. 2), a history painting of a peaceful encounter between the Native American and the white man.²⁰ That there were such peaceful treaties is also evident in the Onondaga Nation's *Penn Belt* (n.d.) (fig. 3), which has been passed on through generations in the Onondaga nation and commemorates an agreement between William Penn and the Onondagas that concerned land settlements and a mutual life in peace and in friendship. (Penn is here seen wearing the characteristic Quaker hat.)²¹

Of similar importance to the Quaker legacy in Pennsylvania were George Fox's visits to America in 1682 and his endorsement of the state when he addressed the early colonial settlers in Philadelphia, urging them always to consider their surroundings, dignity, and moral decency. He said: "My friends, that are gone, and are going over to

²⁰This information functions well in the Quaker community as an emblematic presentation of the Quaker tenet of peaceful coexistence with other religious practices, and non-violent interaction with others. See Hamm, 27-29.

²¹This and eleven other belts were returned to the Onondaga Nation in 1987. A belt (or wampum) is thought of as a living document among the Onondagas. The Onondaga Nation's homepage

plant, and make outward plantations in America, keep your own plantations in your hearts, with the spirit and power of God, that your own vines and lilies not be hurt."²² Here Fox used the analogy of the inward and outward plantations to emphasize the importance of the new settlers living a responsible and peaceful life in accordance with their God.

Quakers and the Arts

As Quakers were opposed to what they perceived was an overtly decorative dress code, so were they opposed to the visual arts, music, and theater, which they (up until the mid-twentieth century) largely considered distracting from the true experience of the divine light.²³ One exception to this ban was the work of the colonial artist Edward Hicks. His series of pastoral paintings entitled the *Peaceable Kingdom*, of which sixty-two are known and often seen as an aesthetic expression of living a peaceful life in accordance

<http://www.onondaganation.org/wampum.penn.html>, accessed 12 June 2007.

²²Fox, in "An Epistle to All Planters and Such Who Are Transporting Themselves into Foreign Plantations in America," (1682) in *The Works of George Fox*, VIII, 218, rpt. Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House, The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia: 1682-1763* (New York: The Norton Library, W.W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1948), 3.

²³Although the first generations of Friends refrained from having their portraits made, there appears to have been no formal banning of portraiture in Quaker culture. Late eighteenth-century Quakers had their silhouettes cut, and some chose to also have their portraits painted. Anne Ayer Verplanck, "Facing Philadelphia: The Social Function of Silhouettes, Miniatures, and Daguerreotypes, 1760-1860," (Ph.D. dissertation, College of William and Mary, 1996); and Dianne C. Johnson, "Living in the

with God (fig. 4). Based on an engraving by Richard Westall, 1800-1815, published in Charles Heath's *The Holy Bible*, 1815, Vol. II, Hicks reworked the print to include a larger natural environment as a backdrop, and his own version of Benjamin West's painting of William Penn's Treaty with the Leni-Lenape Indians of 1777.²⁴ The child, the lion, lamb, calf, and leopard co-exist in peace as they casually rest on the ground and stare into their surroundings. Together the child, animals, Penn, and the Leni-Lenape Indians reinforce the idea of mankind's ability to achieve a peaceful coexistence.²⁵

A similarly peaceful atmosphere is found in Hicks' series of paintings (1847-48) of William Penn's grave at Jordans in England. His version of 1847-48 (fig. 5) is inspired by Hendrik Frans de Cort's painting, popularized in a lithograph by Paul Gauci, and it shows Penn's grave as an open field with a stone wall encircling it. Hicks has painted the Biblical scene of a shepherd and his herd as an expression of Penn's aim for simplicity and union with nature as created by God.²⁶ Penn described death as nothing

Light: Quakerism and Colonial Portraiture" in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 122-146.

²⁴Discussed in Chapter 2.

²⁵Carolyn J. Weekley, ed. *The Kingdoms of Edward Hicks*, exh. cat. (Williamsburg, Virginia: Abby Aldrich Rockefeller Folk Art Center, The Colonial Williamsburg Foundation; and New York, NY: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1999), 94.

²⁶Eleanore Price Mather and Dorothy Canning Miller, *Edward Hicks: His Peaceable Kingdoms and Other Paintings* (East Brunswick, N.J.: Associated University Presses, 1983), rpt. Weekley, 164.

but "a state without the living experimental knowledge of God and his work in the heart."²⁷ Hicks' paintings of the subject depict a gathering of friends relaxing and silently reflecting on the "light within" at Penn's grave, an open field of grass without headstones. At the time, Quaker burial sites typically consisted of nothing but a green field of grass surrounded by stone walls. The silence, tranquility, and unity with nature, is prevalent as the figures in the landscape are made to seem as important as the trees, the clouds, Penn's home, and the open pastures. Small in scale, they blend in with their surroundings. This experience of unity with God in nature reflects back to Fox's revelations in the open rural landscape in England, Scotland, and Ireland during the seventeenth century that prompted his spiritual journey proclaiming peace, pacifism, and a life seeking the light.

Nineteenth-Century Schisms in the Quaker Community

The Quakers didn't manage to live a completely peaceful communal life. Theological differences led to a separation in 1827, with the Philadelphia Orthodox Quakers following the leadings of the Scripture, and the Hicksites, following Elias Hicks (1748-1830), a leading Quaker, whose preference

²⁷William Penn, "Fruits of an Active Life" in Jessamyn West, ed., *The Quaker Reader* (New York: Viking Press, 1962), 208.

was for the individual experience rather than (what he considered) a literal reading of the Bible.²⁸

This schism soon led to other separations. When the charismatic British Friend Joseph John Gurney (1788-1847) visited the United States in the 1840s, the Evangelical church had recruited many new members, and Gurney won Friends over with a more Evangelical approach and his (in contrast to the Hicksites) much stronger emphasis on the Bible. The Gurneyites returned to so-called "programmed" Meetings, including hymns, readings, and a hired pastor who planned the Meeting and preached to the Friends. Contrary to the "un-programmed" Meetings, Evangelical Friends have written statements (called "Books of Discipline") about their faith that affirm the Bible directly as an unfailing source of truth when interpreted by the Holy Spirit.²⁹

Gurney was, however, soon opposed by another influential Quaker from New England, John Wilbur (1774-1856) who stressed the importance of the "Inward Light" and viewed with horror the new Evangelical direction Quakerism was taking. In New England, this led to the "Wilburite-Gurneyite" separation in 1845, with the Gurneyites associated with the Evangelical movement, and the Wilburites often called "Conservatives," referring to a "conservation" or preservation of what they saw as the initial faith

²⁸Hamm, 39-43.

proposed by Fox.³⁰ It was in such a "Conservative" environment that Turrell was raised.

Quakerism in California

As Quaker families moved west, the divisions in Quakerism became increasingly evident, and the Evangelical Quakers became progressively influenced by the evangelical church. The early settlements of the Quakers in California date back to the Gold Rush (1849). The Evangelical Quakers established their first "programmed" Meetings in Salem, Oregon, and San Jose, California in 1859.³¹ The so-called "un-programmed" Meetings were initiated in California in 1882 by the couple Hannah and Joel Bean (1825-1914). Having attended a Quaker Meeting in Iowa, the Beans were similarly troubled by the influences of the evangelical revival, and decided to move to California and start a new Meeting (this direction is often called the Beanites). They initially met in their home, but by 1885 the group had grown in numbers and began to build a Meeting House in San Jose. The Beanites formed the first "un-programmed" Meeting on the west coast and, as the Meetings multiplied in California, Oregon and Washington states, brief written statements were formulated at the Meetings and agreed upon by consensus as was typical

²⁹Anthony Manousos, ed., *A Western Quaker Reader* (Whittier, California: Friends Bulletin Corporation, 2000), 9.

³⁰Hamm, 47-54; and Manousos, 5.

³¹Manousos, 5.

in the Quaker community.³² These documents were open and inclusive "Books of Disciplines," with an emphasis on the "social gospel."³³ Anthony Manousos, editor of *A Western Quaker Reader* (2000), explains it:

Instead of theology, they [The Western Independent Quakers] have emphasized "group mysticism" (the experience of worship), openness to a variety of religious experiences (particularly those of the East, such as Buddhism), and putting one's faith into practice (the social gospel).³⁴

The "social gospel" increasingly inspired Quakers throughout the twentieth century to become involved with humanitarian activities, political activism, and organized peace vigils. Liberal reformers of Quakerism, included the Haverford College professor Rufus Jones (1863-1948), who promoted a "Universalist" and wide world view with an openness to other religions and respect for others as individuals seeking the truth. Jones taught philosophy and psychology at Haverford College in Pennsylvania (1893-1933) and wrote extensively on Quakerism, ethics and philosophy. As a minister, Jones traveled widely in the East, Africa and other continents, met with Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) in India in 1926, and began to formulate a new humanitarian approach to the Quaker mission, carrying a deep respect for other religions. Jones was one of the founders of the American Friends Service

³²Ibid., 7; and David C. Le Shana, *Quakers in America* (Newberg, Oregon: The Barclay Press, 1969), 47-62.

³³Manousos, 9-10.

³⁴Ibid.

Committee (1917) and served as the chair of the committee from 1917-1928 and 1935-1944. The committee aimed to help refugees, Jewish victims of the Nazis, and sufferers from famine. The British Friends Service Council and American Friends Service Committee shared the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947 for their humanitarian efforts during World War I and II. Assisting victims of poverty during the two wars with food, clothes, and blankets; helping organize and rebuild communities between the wars and following World War II; assisting with education, housing projects, food and clothing, while opposing violence and interrogation were some of the reasons why the Nobel Prize Committee decided to award the Nobel Peace Prize to the Quakers.³⁵

Turrell & Quakerism

Raised as a Quaker and attending First Day School (Sunday school) at the local Quaker Meeting House, Turrell was from the very beginning of his life familiar with Quaker history and its tenets, including the "social gospel."³⁶ Turrell stopped going to Meetings when he was in his late teens, and a classmate at Pomona College, Jane Livingston,

³⁵Gunnar Jahn, "Presentation Speech," 1947, The Nobel Prize Homepage, http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/1947/press.htm 1, accessed 15 January 2008.

³⁶James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007, Fifteenth Street Quaker Meeting House, New York, New York.

remembers him entering the school as an eager student in 1961, only to slowly turn into a "serene" hippie.³⁷

Since the 1990s, Turrell has returned to his Quaker practice, and refers to himself as an "un-lapsed" Quaker.³⁸ Now fully practicing as a Quaker, Turrell has recently organized meditation sessions and Quaker Meetings inside some of his installations as a way of enhancing the viewer's awareness and experience of the light.³⁹ Not surprisingly, however, Turrell not only avoids imposing his own experience of light on the viewer, but creates a setting that allows for the viewer to experience light in his or her own way. It is this focus on the individual's encounters with light, experienced both physically and metaphysically by the viewer, that reflects his interest in Quaker practice. Turrell organizes and inserts his light installations into similarly plain interiors aiming to

³⁷Calvin Tomkins, "Flying Into the Light," *The New Yorker* (13 January 2003): 66. Turrell's long-time interest in Buddhism has not interfered with his open-ended Quaker practice, since it is possible to practice Quakerism from a Quaker-Buddhist, Quaker-Jewish, or other spiritual perspective. In fact, the focus on the individual and his/her spiritual experience via silent meetings/meditation, at times practiced directly in nature, is a strong element in both Quakerism and Buddhism.

³⁸James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007.

³⁹Irwin and Turrell's experiments during the Art and Technology (A&T) program also included meditation sessions inside an anechoic chamber. Jane Livingston and Maurice Tuchman, eds., *A Report on the Art and Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1967-1971* (Los Angeles: Los Angeles Country Museum of Art, 1971), 138. For a discussion of the A&T Program, see Chapter 2. More recently, meditation sessions have been organized inside some of Turrell's installations, as part of a public program series at Henry Art Gallery, Seattle.

evoke an individual experience of the divine light, or God's truth.

Literature

Although a short look at James Turrell's numerous commissions and at his exhibition record would seem to confirm his status as one of the most important artists in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, critical writings about the artist are surprisingly limited. There is only one considerable monograph and one substantial exhibition catalog, along with numerous articles, and other more descriptive exhibition texts.

The few critical accounts may, in part, be a result of Turrell's late arrival to Minimalism. In 1968 when Turrell exhibited his first works, Minimalism had already peaked and was in the midst of being reworked into new Post-Minimal expressions.⁴⁰ However, the lack of critical accounts may also (at least in part) be due to the Minimalist discourse, as it had evolved around object based, experiential, and gestalt driven works, largely developed as an east coast phenomenon. Though rarely specifically defined, the

For references, see newsletter *Henry Art, April, May, June, 2003*, (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, 2003).

⁴⁰Lucy Lippard's canonical exhibition "Eccentric Abstraction" at the Fischbach's Gallery in New York, 1966, for example, helped define the term Post-Minimalism. The show featured a presentation of new works that pointed towards a new direction in Minimalism, which included serial forms and industrial materials, but included elements of the absurd, emotional, or even surreal.

recognized Minimalist approach began to take shape by the mid-1960s. Canonical texts include the artists' writings, such as Donald Judd's essay "Specific Objects" (1965) and Robert Morris' "Notes on Sculpture" (1966).⁴¹ Judd's "Specific Objects," was about "the better new work," which he defined as "neither sculpture, nor painting"⁴² but "three-dimensional." He believed that: "the main thing wrong with painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall." Judd wanted to avoid the illusionary space of painting and to expand the parameters of the object to take place in relation to the space around its three-dimensional form. Judd referenced a wide range of artists, including Larry Bell, John Chamberlain, Tony DeLap, Dan Flavin, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Morris, and Claes Oldenburg; only some were to be associated with a Minimalist approach.⁴³

Robert Morris' "Notes on Sculpture" (1966) similarly critiqued illusionism in painting, pointing out how the "better new work takes relationships out of the work and

⁴¹Important texts informing the discourse were Michael Fried, "Art and Objecthood," *Artforum* 5, No. 10 (June 1967): rpt. James Meyer, ed. *Minimalism* (London: Phaidon, 2000), 234-235; Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Arts Yearbook* 8 (1965): 75-82; Kynaston McShine, ed., *Introduction to Primary Structures: Younger American and British Sculptors*, exh. cat. (New York: The Jewish Museum, 1966); Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture I," *Artforum* 4, no. 6 (February 1966): rpt. Meyer, 217-218; and Barbara Rose, "ABC Art," *Art in America* 53, No. 5 (October-November 1965): 57-69.

⁴²Judd, 75-82, rpt. Meyer, 207.

⁴³*Ibid.*, 209.

makes them a function of space, light, and the viewer's field of vision."⁴⁴ Painting, Morris claimed, had within the past decades given up illusionism and become structural, whereas sculpture had never been involved with illusionism, but always employed material, space, and light and "functioned concretely and literally."⁴⁵ Morris advocated work that considered the entire gestalt, where "parts are bound together in such a way that they offer a maximum resistance to perceptual separation," allowing for experiences of its often multiple-sided forms as a "whole, even if seen from a single viewpoint."⁴⁶

It was this anti-illusionist approach informed by gestalt theory that the critic Michael Fried attacked for its theatricality and dependency on the viewer in his essay "Art and Objecthood" (1967).⁴⁷ According to Fried, the modernist work had possibilities for transcending itself by investigating the possibilities within the medium itself. Fried saw:

the literalist preoccupation with time—more precisely, with the duration of the experience [as] paradigmatically theatrical: as though theatre confronts the beholder, and thereby isolates him, with the endlessness not just of objecthood but of time.⁴⁸

⁴⁴Morris, rpt. Meyer, 217.

⁴⁵Ibid.

⁴⁶Ibid., 218.

⁴⁷Ibid., 235.

⁴⁸Ibid.

It was this initial definition of Minimalism that Rosalind Krauss used much later in her influential essay "Overcoming the Limits of Matter: On Revising Minimalism" (1991) when she criticized the Italian collector Giuseppe Panza di Biumo for his "taste for the metaphysical, [and attempt to rewrite] the Minimalist project to suit his own sensibilities."⁴⁹ Separating Minimalism in two, Krauss traced the east coast developments back to Frank Stella's black paintings of the late 1950s, and west coast Minimalism to Ad Reinhardt's black meditative paintings of the same time. Krauss argued that east coast artists with their materialist and anti-illusionist approach were exploring new directions within the language of abstracted form, whereas west coast artists continued in a retrogressive direction toward a "California sublime." To emphasize her point, Krauss labeled east coast Minimalism with a capital "M," and its west coast counterpart with a lower case "m." The latter category included artists such as Robert Irwin and James Turrell, whose perception-based work generated Zen-like experiences of "nothingness" and, to Krauss, resembled the Abstract Expressionist notion of the "abstract sublime."⁵⁰

James Meyer's subsequent survey text *Minimalism* (2000) argued that the east coast/west coast division in Minimalism

⁴⁹Rosalind Krauss, "Overcoming the Limits of Matter: On Revising Minimalism," in John Elderfield, ed., *Studies in Modern Art I: American Art of the 1960s* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1991), 137.

was hardly ever an absolute, but a longstanding "mythological cliché" that was slowly adopted into the discussion of the discourse.⁵¹ According to Meyer, the west coast artists' "Finish Fetish" mode was loosely characterized by a use of transparent, shiny, and synthetic materials often linked to the California car culture and the special quality of the light in the Los Angeles basin area, while the east coast artists' works were described as sober, solid, and plain forms built from industrial materials. This distinction, Meyer argued, was highly problematic, ignoring the many similarities found in individual work by artists on both sides of the country. Meyer, nevertheless, followed suit and omitted any thorough discussion of the west coast artists' works from his text, as he did from his later *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (2001).⁵²

In his essay for the exhibition catalog *A Minimal Future?* Meyer continued to examine the geographic division in Minimalism as proposed by Krauss, with reference to the work of John McCracken and Larry Bell, two west coast artists, who had lived on the east coast for several years. Meyer argued that the lack of critical attention to these figures reflected McCracken's lack of literalism in his work

⁵⁰Ibid., 123.

⁵¹Meyer, 6.

⁵²For a more detailed discussion, see Anna Chave's upcoming "Minimalism, East and West: Patronage and Aura," *Art Bulletin*, September 2008; and Anna Chave, review of *Minimalism: Art and*

(contrary to east coast artists, such as Judd or Morris). In Bell's case, Meyer thought it it was a lack of more theoretical writings by the artist that kept his work outside the Minimalist paradigm.⁵³ While Judd's and Morris' writings certainly influenced Minimalism as a discourse, there are numerous examples of artists from the past who similarly failed to theorize their work, yet are celebrated as canonical examples of their era. If one were to produce a comprehensive survey of Minimalism today, it would make sense to include Turrell, Irwin, Bell, and McCracken as a few of the more important contemporary artists working within the broader scope of the Minimalist practice.

Literature on Spirituality and Art

It is possibly the more spiritual nature of California Minimalism that has prevented a more critical reception of the work. Krauss and the *October* group's general skepticism towards artists embracing the spiritual is emblematic of what is often considered more "serious" scholarship, free of religious implications.⁵⁴ Yve-Alain Bois and Krauss, for

Polemics in the Sixties, by James Meyer, *TATE: The Art Magazine* 26 (Autumn, 2001): 71-72.

⁵³James Meyer, "Another Minimalism," in Ann Goldstein, ed., *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: The Museum of Contemporary Art, 2004), 33-49.

⁵⁴The highly influential and scholarly journal *October* was formed in 1976 by the critics Jeremy Gilbert-Rolfe, Rosalind Krauss, and Annette Michelson. The title derived from the Russian Constructivist filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein's 1927 film of the same title, celebrating the Russian Revolution (1917). Largely

example, both contributors to the *October* journal, have strongly criticized scholars investigating twentieth century artists' interests in the spiritual on several accounts.⁵⁵

Whereas the scholarship on spirituality and modern art has been limited, recent literature reveals a renewed interest in the subject among artists, critics, and scholars. An early example is Maurice Tuchman's 1986 catalog for the exhibition *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985* (1986) held at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art, which was one of the first real attempts to reconsider Modernism in light of the spiritual.⁵⁶ Following the title

followers of Clement Greenberg's formalism yet, as in Greenberg's case, with Marxist underpinnings to their theoretical, now post-structuralist approaches, the *October* group, including also Yve-Alain Bois, Hal Foster, and Benjamin Buchloh, sought to publish only politically engaged philosophical writings.

⁵⁵In her canonical essay "Grids" (1978), for example, Krauss wrote: "[B]y now we find it indescribably embarrassing to mention art and spirit in the same sentence." Rosalind Krauss, "Grids" (1978), rpt. *On the Originality of the Avant-Garde and Other Modernist Myths* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1985), 12. She criticized the art historians E. A. Carmean and Francis O'Connor for their readings of Jackson Pollock's 1950-51 series of "Church Paintings" as emblematic of artist's spiritual inclinations and explorations of Christian iconography. Such a reading, Krauss claimed, falsified Pollock's working methods, which, according to Krauss, was to work with abstraction as a structure of oppositions: line as opposed to color; matter as opposed to field, etcetera. See "Rereading Jackson Pollock, Abstractly," in Rosalind Krauss, *The Originality of the Avant-Garde* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), 221-243. Following Krauss, Yve-Alain Bois similarly criticized the art historian Tom Hess for his too literalist analysis of Barnett Newman's zip paintings as directly responding to the Biblical description of Genesis. Yve-Alain Bois, "Perceiving Newman," in Yve-Alain Bois, *Painting as Model* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1990), 187-213.

⁵⁶Maurice Tuchman, ed., *The Spiritual in Art: Abstract Painting 1890-1985*, exh. cat. (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1986), contains essays by Lynda Dalrympe Henderson, Donald Kuspit, Rose Carol Washton-Long, and others.

of Wassily Kandinsky's well-known book *Considering the Spiritual in Art* (1911), Tuchman invited several scholars to consider various aspects of the topic throughout the twentieth century. The exhibition "Negotiating Rapture: The Power of Art to Transform Lives" at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Chicago, 1996, was curated by Richard Francis and included works by James Lee Byars, Lucio Fontana, and Barnett Newman, among others. The catalog featured essays by Homi K. Bhabha, David Morgan, Georges Didi-Huberman, and Kenneth Frampton to name a few. The Dutch art historian Helen Westgeest subsequently analyzed the influence of Zen Buddhism on artists in Japan, the United States and Europe in *Zen in the Fifties: Interactions in Art Between East and West* (1997). More recently, Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacobs have followed with the program AWAKE: ART, BUDDHISM, and the DIMENSIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS organizing consortium meetings and discussions among artists, art historians, and critics on the influence of Buddhism in modern and contemporary art.⁵⁷

Recent scholarship by Erika Doss, Eleanor Heartney, David Morgan and Sally Promey attempts to revise the

⁵⁷Richard Francis, *Negotiating Rapture: The Power of Art to Transform Lives*, exh. cat. (Chicago: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1996); Helen Westgeest, *Zen in the Fifties: Interactions in Art Between East and West*, 2nd ed. (Zwolle: Waanders Publishers, 1997) and Jacquelynn Baas and Mary Jane Jacobs, ed., *Buddha Mind in Contemporary Art* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2004). See also AWAKE: ART, BUDDHISM, and the

literature on nineteenth- and twentieth-century art and popular culture, to include discussions of artists' religious and spiritual orientations as influence on their visual images, as well as the interpretations and receptions of their work.⁵⁸ It is within this scholarly context, that this dissertation will examine Turrell's work in relation to his Quaker upbringing and renewed Quaker practice.

Existing Literature on Turrell

The current literature on James Turrell makes some references to the artist's Quaker background, yet no writings so far consider his spiritual interest as central to his work. Craig Adcock's substantial monograph on the artist is perhaps the most thoroughly researched and complete written source on the artist's life and work to date.⁵⁹ Published in 1990, Adcock's discussion is based on interviews with the artist and contains informative

DIMENSIONS OF CONSCIOUSNESS, <http://www.artandbuddhism.org/>, accessed 12 July 2005.

⁵⁸For references to current scholarship in American art, see Sally M. Promey, "The 'Return' of Religion in the Scholarship of American Art," *Art Bulletin* 85, No. 3 (Sept. 2003): 581-603; Sally Webster, "Unitarianism and the Iconography of Democracy: Decorations for the Library of Congress" (paper presented at the College Art Association Conference, Philadelphia, 2002); Erika Doss, "Robert Gober's 'Virgin' Installation: Issues of Spirituality in Contemporary Art," in David Morgan and Sally Promey, ed., *The Visual Culture of American Religions* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2001), 129-45; Lynn Herbert, ed., *The Inward Eye, Transcendence in Contemporary Art*, exh. cat. (Houston, Texas: Contemporary Arts Museum, 2002).

descriptions of his installations, important information on his life and work, and a substantial attempt to analyze the work. Adcock briefly touches on Turrell's family ties to Quakerism, but refrains from discussing it in relation to his works.

A few years after Adcock's published monograph, Richard Andrews, Director of the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, provided another extended examination of Turrell's work in the exhibition catalog *James Turrell: Sensing Space* (1992).⁶⁰ Andrews points to Turrell's Quaker upbringing as a possible influence on the artist's later work, though finds little confirmation in his discussions with Turrell. Nevertheless, Andrews believes that:

There is, however, a supporting locus for Turrell's work in the individualistic and humanitarian nature of Quaker teaching and practice. Instructive, too, is the Quaker attitude toward the creation of conditions (such as light-filled, Spartan interiors and silent meetings) in which the individual seeks greater awareness through interior examination rather than relying on spiritual leaders or proscriptive teachings. This tradition is echoed in Turrell's art, which sets up conditions for understanding visual experience in a manner that is neither didactical nor compulsory.⁶¹

⁵⁹Craig Adcock, *James Turrell, The Art of Light and Space* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1990).

⁶⁰Richard Andrews, ed., *James Turrell: Sensing Space*, exh. cat. (Seattle: Henry Art Gallery, The University of Washington, 1992).

⁶¹Richard Andrews, "The Light Passing By," in Andrews, 10.

Neither Adcock's nor Andrews's texts, however, published before Turrell returned to Quakerism, discusses this issue in depth.

Methodology

It is the goal of this dissertation to investigate and demonstrate the connections between Quaker philosophy and aesthetics and Turrell's work with light, developed in museums, galleries, architectural structures, and directly in nature. I have attended lectures and spoken with Turrell several times on different occasions. At first welcoming and enthusiastic about this project, he unfortunately declined to make time for an interview once I had researched the subject. Therefore I rely on historical, archival, and written material, as well as on interviews with members of the Quaker community and others familiar with his work.

Early sources by Quaker practitioners, such as Fox's seventeenth century *Journals*, and William Penn's notes and letters, will be discussed in conjunction with Turrell's work with light. Nineteenth-century Quaker literature, such as John Greenleaf Whittier's (1807-1892) poetry, will be linked to American classics, such as Walt Whitman's (1819-1892) *Leaves of Grass* (1860-61) and Ralph Waldo Emerson's (1803-1882) essay "Nature" (1836), in the discussion of Turrell's work with light and a direct engagement with the

environment.⁶² Finally, literature on Quakerism and mysticism by the twentieth-century reformer of Quakerism Rufus M. Jones is relevant to the renewed interest in Quakerism in the 1960s, including activism, pacifism, and war opposition.

Recent literature on historical Quaker Meeting Houses, along with interviews with Quaker observers, will shed new light on the discussion of Turrell's installations and their possible use as vehicles for spiritual experiences. Historians Catherine C. Lavoie and Bernard L. Herman have recently written about Quaker Meeting Houses. Art historians Carolyn J. Weekley and Dianne C. Johnson, who work on, respectively, Edward Hicks and colonial portraiture, discuss the Quaker ambivalence towards visual representation. Works by anthropologist J. William Frost, who focuses on changing Quaker ideals for material culture and on Quaker society in ideological terms, have been consulted and provide valuable information on Quakerism as a religious vocation in continuous flux.⁶³ Although none of these texts directly refer to Turrell and his work with light, all of them are informative source material for a discussion of Turrell's work viewed in relation to his interest in Quakerism.

⁶²Whitman was raised as a Quaker and, although not practicing in his adult life, vividly recalled his childhood experiences in Quaker Meetings with his parents. Emerson was a great admirer of Fox, though not a member of the Quaker society.

The dissertation is organized chronologically, following the path of Turrell's life and the major series of his works which he returned to time and again. This approach results in certain chronological gaps within and between the chapters, but adheres to the artist's conceptual development. Chapter 1. The Early Quaker Experiences will discuss the artist's early childhood experiences of his room, family, and Quaker Meeting Houses in relation to works that directly correspond to his childhood memories: *Razor* (1982), *Pleiades* (1983), and *Wolf* (1984).

Chapter 2. Perceptual Cells. In 1968, Turrell, in collaboration with experimental psychologist Edward Wortz and artist Robert Irwin, investigated Ganzfeld spaces created inside an anechoic chamber.⁶⁴ Although Turrell's experiments during the project have been discussed in relation to science and perception, his notes at the end of the project show a concurrent involvement with spiritual issues: "If either art or technology becomes a religion, maybe this stuff will start getting more exciting. There's

⁶³All in Lapsansky and Verplanck.

⁶⁴The three worked as part of the Art & Technology Program of the Los Angeles County Museum of Art. Livingston and Tuchman, 125-143. A Ganzfeld (German for "entire field") is a 360 degree visual field in which there are no reference points, only light of a homogenous color that makes it appear to be solid or have substance. It is a technique used in parapsychology to examine an individual's extra-sensory perception (ESP), presenting him/her with sensory stimulation that fills the individual's entire field of vision.

got to be an Art and Technology Christ...."⁶⁵ The series *Perceptual Cells* (since 1991), particularly *Solitary* (1992) and *Gasworks* (2002), evoke the experiences of the anechoic chamber, and of solitary confinement. They will be discussed in relation to Turrell's early political engagement with Quaker activism and work as a draft counselor during the Vietnam War. The pieces will be considered as works provoking sensations of anxiety, claustrophobia, and fear, followed by a sense of release, elation, and emotional healing, comparable to Quakerism.

Chapter 3: Building Spiritual Spaces will discuss examples of Turrell's work related to or within structures that have a specifically spiritual focus, such as the *Meeting* (1986) and Live Oak Meeting House (2001). Although many of Turrell's projects tacitly evoke the sparse and simple interiors of Quaker Meeting Houses, it was not until the installation *Meeting* at P.S. 1 (1986-88), that Turrell himself realized he had been unconsciously responding to his Quaker heritage. In 1995, the commission of a new design for Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas, provided Turrell with an explicit opportunity for acknowledging his Quaker roots and exploring his art as a possible vehicle for spiritual experience.

Chapter 4: Sanctuaries in Nature will discuss Turrell's installations in nature as inherent to

⁶⁵Ibid., 140.

Quakerism. Quaker cemeteries, stripped of ornaments and gravestones, are often only rectangular spaces with a line of benches attached to stone walls and an empty field of grass in the middle. This chapter will discuss several of Turrell's works alluding to such spaces constructed in an outside environment: *Irish Sky Garden* (1990), *Celestial Vault* (1996), and the *Roden Crater* (since 1974), made in and of an extinct volcano crater in the Painted Desert of Arizona.

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Bringing The Cosmos Closer.

Historians surveying historical Quaker Meeting Houses refer to the sparse interior spaces as conveying a strong sense of emptiness, or "pregnant space." Similar to such Quaker Meeting Houses, Turrell's installations aim to provide the viewer with a sense of the simple and serene, removing viewers from a materialist realm and transporting them into a visual, experiential, and mental space.

It is the goal of this dissertation to demonstrate that in aiming to "bring the cosmos closer" and having viewers form their own "experience of soul," Turrell's works can be considered as rooted in a contemporary expression of Quaker practice. Born and raised as a Conservative Quaker, Turrell changed his own practice to a more liberal stance in the 1960s, drifted into Buddhism, only gradually to return to

Quakerism as a Quaker Universalist, yet with a strong conservative bent introduced by his Quaker grandmother.⁶⁶

⁶⁶Universalist Quakers believe spiritual awareness may be achieved by everyone everywhere through teachings of all the great religions, as well as in personal experiences of an individual seeker who has no religion at all. On Turrell and his Quaker orientation see James Turrell, interview by Robert Baldrige.

Chapter 1. The Early Quaker Experiences

Turrell's recollections of his childhood growing up in the 1940s and 1950s in Pasadena, California, are closely tied to his memories of being raised in a Conservative Quaker family. Turrell's grandmother Mary Frances Hodges (d. 1958), and his mother Margaret Hodges Turrell (1905-1979) were both Quakers, and his father Archibald Milton Turrell (1898-1963) was a Huguenot.⁶⁷ Turrell was the youngest of three children. His brother David Alan Turrell (b. January 25, 1932) was born almost eleven years prior to James, and his sister Barbara Joan Turrell (b. February 4, 1936) would have been nine years old when her younger brother arrived. With both parents close to or in their forties, Turrell was a late child who spent much time on his own, or with his grandmother. Born in the mid- or late-nineteenth century, his grandmother must have introduced him to a nineteenth-century based Quakerism that may have appeared quite austere and old-fashioned in the nineteen-forties and -fifties California.

This chapter will consider Turrell's early childhood memories of his family, his childhood room, and the two local Quaker Meeting Houses: The Villa Street Meeting (1885-mid 1980s), which he attended as a child, and The Orange Grove Meeting House (1909-present), which he attended as a young man. It will also examine the exhibition catalog *Air*

Mass (1993) published in conjunction with the exhibition of the same name and at the time when Turrell began to speak publicly about his return to Quakerism. Prior to this publication, Turrell had been relatively quiet and ambiguous about his faith as informing his work, claiming that he was "a little too close to that" to be able to speak about it.⁶⁸ In *Air Mass*, however, he decided to include two autobiographical texts "Night Curtain" and "Early Flight," that openly discussed his Quaker roots and childhood recollections. He decided to insert them into the publication between definitions of weather conditions, aerial photographs from the 1930s, excerpts from Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's *The Little Prince* (1945 edition), and images and descriptions of his own installation work. In this way, Turrell created an implied and open-ended narrative, which, I argue, is emblematic of his renewed Quaker thinking and explains the underlying premise of his work.

"Night Curtain" and "Early Flight" are not only Turrell's first, but also his only autobiographical texts published, and therefore they are of great relevance in this context. I will discuss their content in relation to the works *Razor* (1982), *Pleiades* (1983), and *Wolf* (1984), which directly relate to features of his childhood room, and consider *Air Mass* with the implicit narrative conveyed by

⁶⁷James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007.

⁶⁸Andrews, 38.

his juxtaposition of the autobiographical texts, images, and related material. The composite artistic concept revealed in the implicit narrative is then applied to the three works included in the "Air Mass" exhibition: *Trace Elements* (1993), *Wedgework IV* (1993), and *Air Mass* (1993).

Quakerism in Pasadena

Turrell grew up in Pasadena, a city in the suburbs of Los Angeles, and home to three major branches of Quakerism: the Evangelical Friends, the Conservative Friends, and the Hicksites. Each had its own Meeting House, two of which Turrell attended. (Turrell attended the Conservative Meeting as a child, the Hicksite Meeting as a young man).⁶⁹ The Evangelical group of Quakers settled first in Pasadena. Their first Meeting was held June 1882, and in 1884 they built their first Meeting House and became officially acknowledged as a part of the First Friends Church. The group later built two more churches, making them the largest of the three Quaker branches in Pasadena; it remained active until the 1990s.⁷⁰

⁶⁹Joe Dmohowski, e-mail correspondence with author referencing correspondence between Dmohowski, archivist at Whittier College, and Marjorie de Hartog, Quaker, Houston, Texas, 27 May 2007. Turrell confirmed the above to Marjorie de Hartog when Turrell visited Houston.

⁷⁰I am much in debt to Gregory McReynolds, Pasadena Historical Society, for sharing this information with me. Gregory

The Villa Street Meeting

The Villa Street Meeting was founded shortly after the Evangelical Meeting, in 1886 by a group of Conservative Quakers, many of whom had migrated from Iowa.⁷¹ The first Meetings were held in private homes until the members acquired a lot at the corner of Villa Street and Galena Avenue in Pasadena in 1889. A history of Villa Street Meeting indicates that Joel Bean visited the Meeting in 1889 and that the Meeting followed the concept of "preserving" the early Quakers' practice of simplicity and temperance, as they gathered on Sundays for "unprogrammed" meetings.⁷² The Meeting grew in numbers and the Meeting House was enlarged in 1906, and again in 1928.⁷³ It was eventually dismantled in the mid-1980s due to a decreasing membership and disputes with the mother organization, the Iowa Yearly Meeting. A major dispute arose when the Friends in Iowa called a man to be Clerk of the Iowa Meeting who was not a believer in Jesus Christ, or in temperance. To a Conservative Meeting, this posed a serious problem. The Villa Street Friends in Pasadena voiced their disapproval, but to no avail. As a result, in 1984 they decided to separate themselves from the

McReynolds, Pasadena Historical Society, correspondence to author, 6 June 2007.

⁷¹Ibid.

⁷²*Conservative Friends Meeting, 500 Villa Street, Pasadena, CA.* Pamphlet not dated, but edited by Elizabeth (Bessie) Pearson, member of the Villa Street Meeting, and published sometime after 5 August 1960, 6.

⁷³Ibid.

Iowa Yearly Meeting. The number of members had by then dropped substantially and they decided to sell off the Meeting's property and finally dissolved on August 21, 1988.⁷⁴

Turrell's Grandmother

It was Turrell's grandmother Mary Frances Hodges who first took him to the local Quaker Meeting House and introduced her grandson to Quaker tenets. Turrell has often recalled how she would take him by the hand and say: "Let's go inside and greet the light." As a child, he would take it quite literally and Turrell believes he today is, in a sense, still trying "to figure out" exactly what she meant.⁷⁵ He recalls that he was left with his grandmother quite often during his formative years and in his own anecdotal way, he describes his grandmother as undoubtedly a very strong believer. She made certain her grandson attended the Villa Street Meeting First Day School, and as a Conservative Quaker, she made sure he understood the Quaker tenets. She was a strong believer in temperance and a life of simplicity.

Turrell also remembers that his uncle:

⁷⁴Connor Edmonds, archivist at George Fox University, Newberg, Oregon, e-mail correspondence to author, 11 July 2007.

⁷⁵James Turrell, interview with Robert Baldrige, and interview for *Art 21*, Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), <http://www.pbs.org/art21/artists/turrell/clip2.html> accessed 15 June 2007.

had raised avocados in the Escondido area and used Mexican laborers. My grandmother would make extremely hot salsa for them and read the Bible to them, even though they didn't speak English. They would cross themselves, right? [laughs] I was involved with some of her views, which was a bit startling to my mother, who was a modern person. My grandmother was not. She still wore the plain dress with the bonnet, and had me wear the hat.⁷⁶

Turrell has on several occasions recalled that his clothes as a child were without any modern details and rather traditional. He narrates how zippers were normal at the time, but that he was not allowed to get a pair of pants with zippers as such new inventions were considered too fashionable by his Quaker grandmother. He collected money and bought a pair himself, which he managed to hide in his locker at school. Much to his regret, zippers went out of style for a brief moment right about the time he had been able to collect enough money to buy a new pair.⁷⁷ Whether literally true or embellished by Turrell, the story reflects the Quakers' tenets of a life lived in simplicity, as practiced by his grandmother.⁷⁸

⁷⁶Richard Whittaker, "Greeting the Light, an Interview with James Turrell," *Works + Conversations*, Issue #2, <http://www.conversations.org/99-1-turrell.htm>, accessed 20 March 2006.

⁷⁷James Turrell, "The Good Doctor Newman" (lecture at "Reconsidering Barnett Newman: A Symposium," The Philadelphia Museum of Art, 6 April 2002).

⁷⁸One of the few existing vintage photographs of Villa Street Meeting House (c. 1894) (fig. 6) confirms the historic practice of plain dress at the Meeting. A woman in plain dress is seated on the front steps of the porch. There is very little if any decorative detail on the woman's dress. A later photograph (fig. 7) (1894-1900) shows members of the congregation in conversation, possibly after a Meeting. Characteristic is the simple attire

Following the idea of "preserving" Quakerism and the initial ideas of George Fox in the early days, the Conservative Quakers preferred the austere dress code of the traditional plain dress, with the customs of plain speech, temperance, and a belief in the early Quakers' spiritual tenets. They additionally believed any kind of art (theatre, music, dance, poetry, novels, and visual arts) would only disturb their spiritual quest. In the 1960s, Frederick B. Tolles writes:

Of Quaker theory as applied to fine arts—to painting, sculpture, music, poetry, and the drama—there is almost nothing to be said, for the early [seventeenth-century] Friends banished them almost totally from their lives...for the arts whose chief purpose was to please the senses they had nothing but scorn of becoming entangled with the winsome delights of the "world" if they once gave way to the human appetite for sensuous beauty.⁷⁹

The conservative Quakers were the group of Quakers who held on to this belief the longest (until the 1930s).⁸⁰ It was this very conservative approach that Turrell's grandmother believed in and passed on to her grandson.

Turrell's Mother

that includes bonnets for the women and hats for the men. This also seems to be the practice in a 1908 photo (fig. 8), perhaps featuring a wedding between Mary Huestis Fawcett and Joseph Patterson on March 24th. Gregory McReynolds, Pasadena Historical Society, correspondence to author, 11 June 2007.

⁷⁹Anna Cox Brinton, *Quaker Profiles, Pictorial and Biographical, 1750-1850* (Wallington, Pa.: Pendle Hill Publications, 1964), 1.

⁸⁰Hamm, 102. In the case of Turrell's grandmother, it was obviously longer than that.

Turrell's mother Margaret Hodges Turrell (1905-1979) possessed, according to Turrell, a strong and dynamic personality.⁸¹ She studied medicine in the nineteen-twenties though never practiced it.⁸² In the 1960s, following her husband's death, Turrell's mother volunteered for the Peace Corps in Malawi where she taught zoology. Her stay in Africa was followed by years of teaching in an Indian school in Ganado, Arizona, near the New Mexico border.⁸³ While teaching in Ganado, she would travel on vacations to places as distant as Kathmandu in Nepal. It is possible that Turrell's mother may have been a more liberal and Universalist Quaker, but unfortunately very little material exists on Margaret Turrell's endeavors from this time, nor have they been thoroughly described by Turrell. The fact that the *Roden Crater* project is in Arizona, approximately 150 miles from Ganado, is an interesting factor that may have drawn Turrell to this location in his later life. Turrell has briefly mentioned how he traveled with his parents to the Grand Canyon as a child, and was quite familiar with the area when he purchased the land for his *Roden Crater* project.⁸⁴

⁸¹Adcock, 3.

⁸²Ibid.

⁸³Ibid., 154, and Tomkins, 66. It is not clear exactly when she was in the Peace Corps, nor when she taught in Ganado.

⁸⁴Adcock, 154.

Turrell may have inherited some of his mother's penchant for humanitarian deeds. His efforts rescuing Tibetan monks by flying them out of China after the 1959 rebellion is a salient example.⁸⁵ Turrell's extensive travel for exhibition projects and commissions possibly mirrors his mother's urge to explore many different cultures and corners of the world. Exhibitions and commissions have taken him to Japan, Korea, Israel, and many of the European countries. As a Quaker and a teacher, his mother may also have influenced Turrell's story-telling and anecdotal way of conveying the ideas behind his work. Turrell often lectures in a way that easily brings the audience into his work as they follow his natural and relaxed delivery.

Turrell's Father

Turrell's father Archibald Milton Turrell (1898-1963) was also a teacher, in fact a dedicated professor at Pasadena Junior College.⁸⁶ The school had in 1926 adopted a pedagogical approach of "vocational guidance," and in 1927 hired counselors to work with professors and students. With a focus on education in the sciences, the school included an astronomy observatory, inaugurated in 1931 in the presence of Albert Einstein, who lectured in German.

⁸⁵Tomkins, 66.

⁸⁶Archie Turrell later became the principal of John Muir Junior College. Adcock, 2.

Archie Turrell's pedagogical approach was largely formed around the idea of "vocational guidance."⁸⁷ Together with two of his colleagues, D. Welty LeFever, Ph.D., Professor of Education, University of Southern California, and Henry I. Weitzel, Ph.D. Counselor, Pasadena Junior College, he published *Principles and Techniques of Guidance* (1941). The three described their theories of team teaching. Nowhere does it indicate who wrote which part. Although Archie M. Turrell was a Huguenot and not a Quaker,⁸⁸ the approach of this collaborative work is not dissimilar to the Quaker concept of coming to consensus towards a common goal rather than seeking individual recognition and acknowledgement.

The three authors showed a clear involvement with the political issues raised by World War II. Their social engagement, broad worldview, and determination echo the Quaker "social ministry." They wrote:

⁸⁷David Welty Lefever, Archie Turrell, and Henry I. Weitzel, *Principles and Techniques of Guidance* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1942), 3.

⁸⁸James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007. The Huguenots were members of the French Reformed Protestant Church and Calvinists. They formed in the early seventeenth century and became known for their strong critique of the Roman Catholic Church and its tenets based on rituals, images, saints, pilgrimages, and church hierarchy. They believed that the Christian faith should be practiced by a simple and disciplined life in accordance with the Bible, and revolted against images, altars, and majestic church buildings. Persecuted in France, many of the Huguenots chose to immigrate to the Netherlands and to the United States, as the Anglican Quakers and the German Methodists had. Arthur James Grant, *The Huguenots* (Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1969).

The chaotic situation in world affairs with war selected as the only means of settling differences; national problems of unemployment, wretched housing, and poverty amidst plenty; a country in which the most frequent age of criminals is nineteen (the next most frequent being eighteen, then twenty-one); a demonstrable lack of intelligent life planning on the part of youth: these are some of the troubles that man has created for himself. [...] If man would bring to bear upon his personal and social problems the same genius that he has utilized in the mastery of his physical environment, the human race would experience in the next three hundred years social advances as astounding as all previous technological inventions. For the present, the least what can be done is to practice known principles of human improvement.⁸⁹

In their book, Archie Turrell and his colleagues suggested that guidance hitherto had been discussed from one of two standpoints: "1/ that guidance is a point of view, a way of looking at things, a philosophy of education; or 2/ that guidance is a process, a way of doing things, a method."⁹⁰ They proposed instead a combination of the two, emphasizing activities that would prove to better the students' health and promote certain personality changes in the interest of better vocational learning.⁹¹ Vocational guidance, for the authors, had to start out in an educational setting and include student involvement with student government and other services organized for the improvement of the surrounding community. Using vocational

⁸⁹Lefever, Turrell, and Weitzel, 3-4.

⁹⁰Ibid., 15.

⁹¹Ibid.

guidance the teacher would enable the student to be increasingly capable of guiding him/herself. Guidance could take place individually and evolve into group activities. In this way the students would learn to develop independently and continue to work in constructive relationships with others.⁹²

Pasadena Junior College incorporated many venues for the students to develop their goals in life through the curriculum. By the late 1920s, student clubs were already a significant part of college life. About sixty clubs were formed by and for students, aimed at students interested in academics, sports, or social activities.⁹³ Some were open to all students while others were more restricted, requiring a special invitation. The goal was to interest every student in social or vocational activities. Through the clubs, some students were even in charge of safety and student policing, authorized to bring charges against those who had violated campus rules. Resulting fines were donated to the student fund.⁹⁴

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³The non-restrictive organizations included clubs for exceptional scholarship, Christian fellowship, Bible study, world fellowship, home economics, commerce, radio, engineering, biology, poetry, literature, theatre, forestry, international studies, and athletics. Students could also learn Japanese, German, French, Latin, Spanish, among other languages. Pasadena City College Website, "The Beginning Years," <http://www.pasadena.edu/about/history/beginning/begin2.cfm>, accessed 18 April 2006.

⁹⁴Ibid.

Archie Turrell's standards for vocational guidance, written only two years prior to his son's birth, may give us a good sense of the parameters and ways in which Turrell was raised. The youngest son of two dedicated teachers, one the principal of one of the larger institutions in the city, James Turrell became an honors student and president of his senior class at George Ellery Hale High School.⁹⁵ He learned early on that he also had responsibilities and could do his part to make the world a better place.

The Childhood Home as Architectural Precedent

Turrell's father influenced his later work in a rather unpredictable way. Constructing an addition to the house, his son's room ended up situated on top of the porch. As the roof of the porch was slanted, so was the floor of Turrell's room. Interestingly, a sloping floor is also an intentional and characteristic feature in many historical Quaker Meeting Houses, allowing the assembled to see and hear one another. Later in life, Turrell often made use of a sloping floor in his installations. *Pleiades* (1983) (fig. 9), for example, consists of a sloping ramp that leads the viewer into the center of a dark room, and by its directional position in the experience serves as a means of slightly disorienting the person entering. As his or her eyes adjust, they may gradually begin to see the available seating in the middle

⁹⁵Adcock, 3.

of the pitch-black room. The floor behind the benches is also dramatically raised in a tilted/sloping angle. *Pleiades* is one of the most challenging of Turrell's installations, as it generally takes between twenty to thirty minutes to adjust to the darkness of the space before the eyes begin to see a series

of little red spots emerging from the center. This experience of waiting and seeing actual light may be seen metaphorically as similar to the process of waiting for the spiritual light to emerge during a Meeting. Once the perceptual experience inside *Pleiades* began to emerge for me, small red dots moved like little "stars" towards me before they vanished, like fireflies in the dark. The title of the work interestingly refers to an open cluster of more than 300 stars in the constellation Taurus, which is coincidentally also Turrell's astrological sign.

The use of an aperture or window in many of Turrell's installations is similarly a feature that points back to the windows in Turrell's childhood room (fig. 10). Turrell has described how the windows in his room were covered with green and tarred black-out curtains to keep all light inside in case of a possible night attack during World War II. Turrell punched holes in the tarred curtains in patterns of star constellations. He states:

My room had these dark green curtains with tar in the middle that were completely opaque. You could pull them down and make the room quite dark in the day, although some light would come in around the edges. When I was six years old, in order to assert my own presence in the room, I took a pin or needle to these curtains and pierced them to make star patterns and the constellations. I would simply make bigger holes for stars of greater magnitude. Pulling down the curtains and darkening the room, you could see the stars in the middle of the day.⁹⁶

Soon the outside light penetrated the darkened interior in both a metaphorical and literal way. In a sense, Turrell was already bringing the "cosmos closer." He explains:

These weren't just holes in the curtains, they were holes in reality. By changing the reality of conscious-awake state of day, one could see farther into imagined space to the stars, which were actually there but obscured by the light of the sun. In the same room my father could still raise the curtains and open the windows to allow in the birdsong. The curtains did not last long and began to tear because they were riddled with so many holes. Several curtains were greatly weakened by the Milky Way.⁹⁷

Turrell's use of an actual window in the installation *Razor* (1982) (fig. 11), installed at the Center for Contemporary Art in Seattle, Washington, features a large piece of sheetrock blocking the windows, allowing only a little light to enter in and around the panel. As this light would blend with the artificial fluorescent light installed inside the room, a clear rectangular line of white light

⁹⁶James Turrell, *Air Mass* (London: South Bank Centre, 1993), 11.

emerged at the end of the room. The outside light had been funneled inside and merged with the interior light aiming to create a visual experience that was both real and unreal.⁹⁸

The eerie installation *Wolf* (1984) created for the non-profit Capp Street Project in San Francisco made similar use of the existing windows in the building (fig. 12). The Capp Street project was established by the arts patron Ann Hatch in 1983 and located at 65 Capp Street in San Francisco, in a building designed by the Zen-inspired artist David Ireland (b. 1930).⁹⁹ The program's goal was to provide opportunities for artists to live, work, and exhibit within the space, creating works of a site-specific nature. Artists, curators, and museum administrators, all of whom served on the board, selected the artists. In 1983 and 1984, the invited artists included Bill Viola, Mary Lucier, James Turrell and others.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷Ibid., 12.

⁹⁸Brown, 184.

⁹⁹Ireland was also a member of the board, as were Richard Andrews (then coordinator of the Art in Public Places Project, Seattle Arts Commission), Nancy Drew (director of the Beard's Fund), Kathy Halbreich (director of exhibitions, Committee of the Visual Arts, MIT), Richard Koshalek (director, Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles) and Jim Melchert (chairman of the Department of Art, University of California, Berkeley). (The Capp Street Project eventually became a part of the California College of the Arts, Wattis Institute, in 1998). Kathryn Brew, ed., *Capp Street Project, 1985, 1986*, exh. cat. (San Francisco, California: Capp Street Project, 1987).

¹⁰⁰Among the board members were David Ireland (artist), Richard Koshalek (director of the Museum of Contemporary Art), and Michael Auping (chief curator, Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo). The Giuseppe Panza Papers, Series IV, James Turrell. Getty Institute Research Library, Los Angeles, California.

Living there gave Turrell a unique opportunity to investigate the space and its existing light properties. Similar to the early experiences of his childhood room, he developed work that made use of the outside light by creating three-dimensional ephemeral "projection pieces," literally directed onto the walls inside the space in various places. Turrell added fluorescent light sources inside the space, so that the natural and artificial light from the outside would blend. He also considered the outside experience of the house. By changing the streetlights to a deep green, Turrell used colored light to make the house look both ghostly and unreal, transforming his early childhood experiences of the windows in his room into an art project at Capp Street.

The Significance of the Meeting House

Similar to his childhood room, the Villa Street Meeting House and the Orange Grove Meeting House, where Turrell went to "greet the light," became spaces that provided models for Turrell's later works. The simplicity valued by Conservative Quakers is evidenced in the photographs of the Villa Street Meeting House. The two doors mark separate front entrances for men and women. As in most traditional Quaker Meeting Houses, the interior Meeting room would have been divided during business meetings in order for the men to discuss their concerns and the women theirs. This was a tradition

that went out of fashion by the mid-twentieth century. The doors, however, remained as seen in the photographs. Long rectilinear windows flanked the two doors and also punctuated the sides of the building. Only a simple sign over the porch indicated that the building was the Friends Meeting House. The symmetry, simplicity, and partition walls found here are all elements present in Turrell's design for Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas (to be discussed in Chapter 3).

By the time the Villa Street Meeting was dissolved in the late 1980s, however, Turrell had already joined the Hicksite Orange Grove Meeting to work with a more vibrant group of Quakers and activists opposing the Vietnam War. It is possible Turrell's change of direction in worship was a rebellious act against the austere Quaker principles practiced by his grandmother. It is also possible that the grandmother's death in 1958 freed Turrell to explore other branches of Quakerism. The political activism, open discussions, and liberal Quaker community must have been attractive to a young man like Turrell, living in the turmoil of the 1960s and interested in becoming politically engaged in opposing the Vietnam war (See Chapter 2).

The austere Quaker aesthetics evidenced in the design of the two Meeting Houses frequented by Turrell had a profound influence on his later work. The Orange Grove community formed in 1907 and commissioned their Meeting

House in 1908. It was designed to convey the traditional idea of a life of simplicity; the building was discretely inserted into the existing local environment. Orange Grove Meeting House (1909) is set back from a quiet side road in an area of private residences (fig. 13). Only a simple sign indicates this is a building for worship. The building's frame sits on a brick foundation and its cross-gabled roof allows for a broad porch that spans the entire façade. The shingled gables, exposed rafters, and overhanging eaves reflect a high level of craftsmanship. To enter the Meeting House, the visitor climbs a few stairs up to the wooden porch (fig. 14). The outside walls and windows are all white, with pillars, doors, and the entire gable painted in a light grey color. There are also grey built-in wooden benches on both sides of the porch; from there the grey wooden double doors open directly into the Meeting room.

Arriving to Meeting from the back of the house, the visitor enters into a rectangular hallway. The door is placed on the long side of the rectangular room, which prompts a sensation of something cozy and domestic (fig. 15 & 16). The simplicity in Live Oak Quaker Meeting House is in many ways similar to a Shaker Meeting House. Canterbury Meeting House, New Hampshire (1792) (fig. 17), for example, similarly features two separate entrances for men and women, and the simplicity of the windows and doors resembles that of historical Quaker Meeting Houses. The color scheme,

however, is very different. Shakers painted their Meeting Houses white on the outside as a way of indicating that the buildings were for worship, whereas the color within the building would be painted in a light and rather bluish shade.¹⁰¹

Orange Grove also bears references to the Arts and Crafts movement dominating Pasadena in the early twentieth century. The David B. Gamble House, for example, was constructed in Pasadena in 1908-1909, at the same time as the Quakers built Orange Grove. Designed by the brothers Charles Summer Greene (1868-1957) and Henry Mather Greene (1870-1954) and their architectural firm Greene & Greene, the Gamble house is a three story residential building designed with a focus on the use of natural materials (fig. 18). It reflects Greene & Greene's interest in the Arts & Crafts Movement characteristic style, centered on craftsmanship and decoration. While the Gamble House's exterior is also inspired by Japanese traditional building style, its rustic wooden interior (fig. 19), organized around the living room with designed wooden furniture and built in benches, parallels the Meeting room at Orange Grove Meeting House (fig. 20).¹⁰²

¹⁰¹Julie Nicoletta, *The Architecture of the Shakers* (Woodstock, Vermont: The Countryman Press, 1995), 39.

¹⁰²Edward R. Bosley, *Gamble House: Greene & Greene* (London: Phaidon, 1992).

At the Hicksite Live Oak Quaker Meeting House, a very comfortable atmosphere greets the visitor. It is in fact similar to stepping into a private living room. The hallway serves as entrance, library, and social room with sofas in a corner, and with bookshelves placed against the walls. Similar to the Villa Street Meeting House, the Orange Grove Meeting House has two doors leading into the Meeting room, one previously used by women, the other by the men (fig 20).

Though resembling a residential house from the outside, the Meeting room with its white interior walls and sparsely decorated interior creates a very different atmosphere. It is a square room approximately 30 by 30 feet, suitable for the group of approximately 70-80 Friends who still today arrive for Meeting on Sundays. Nothing is unnecessary here, no images, only benches, a traditional stove, light fixtures, and windows. The wooden benches date from 1909 and are arranged in rows forming a horseshoe facing the fireplace and the chimney.

A new wing added in 1918 resembles the original Meeting House in its proportions, materials, and interior light. A partition wall separates the Meeting room from the larger added social room and kitchen (fig. 21). The ceiling light fixture consists of a simple circle of uncovered white light bulbs (fig. 22). The windows are arranged in sets of two or three allowing more light to enter the rooms (fig. 23). They also offer the visitor a view of the lush and green foliage

outside the windows, or the pedestrians and cars passing by on the adjacent road.

Members of the community can follow the movements of the light from the outside as it shimmers through the window and the surface of the glass and enters into the much darker interior space and blends with the artificial interior light.

Turrell's references to his early experiences inside Villa Street Meeting House, and later the Orange Grove Meeting House, offer an insight into how he might have perceived the light as a child, encouraged to go inside and "greet the light" and taking it quite literally.¹⁰³ This blend of the inside and outside light is indeed found in most of his light installations.

Air Mass: Turrell's Acknowledgement of his Quaker Roots

It was not until 1993 that Turrell publicly acknowledged his Quaker roots and their subtle ties to his work. Nonetheless, constructing the installation *Meeting* at P.S.1. in 1986, he suddenly realized that he had intuitively responded to his Quaker heritage. The square room with a skylight and benches built into the walls reminded him of the Quaker Meeting House he had attended with his grandmother in Pasadena, and later as a young man. Gradually

¹⁰³James Turrell, interview by Robert Baldrige, and interview for *Art 21*, PBS.

returning to Quakerism around 1993, Turrell decided to explore his past and Quaker roots more specifically.

The exhibition "Air Mass" was organized in 1993 by Susan Ferleger Brades at the non-profit Hayward Gallery, run by the Arts Council in London and located on the south bank of the River Thames. Brades, who had seen Turrell's show at the Whitney Museum in 1980-81, right before she left the U.S. to begin a new job as Exhibition Organizer at the Hayward Gallery, was "blown away" by his installations, which sparked the idea of arranging a show of Turrell's work at the Hayward. Whereas Turrell was little known in the United States at the time, he was even less known in England, and the gallery's exhibition profile was mostly oriented towards British and European contemporary art. It was not until much later, when the gallery was planning a show of Georgia O'Keeffe's work that would only take up half of the gallery space, that an exhibition of Turrell's installations came into planning. Brades contacted Turrell to see if he was interested. The two discussed the layout of four rooms: one with photographs and drawings pertaining to the *Roden Crater* (1974 to the present) and the three installations *Trace Elements* (1993), *Wedgework IV* (1993), and the "Skyspace" *Air Mass* (1993), the latter a temporary installation in the Sculpture Courtyard. As is common practice, the show and the catalog *Air Mass* published in

conjunction with the exhibition were both paid for by the Hayward.¹⁰⁴

While exhibition catalogs of Turrell's work have often been compiled in the usual way, in collaboration with the exhibition's curators, *Air Mass* consisted of a compilation of texts and images and the artist's autobiographical stories as rendered in interviews of the artist by Mark Holborn, the editor of the book. The illustrations that accompanied the autobiographical and scientific texts were drawings made by Turrell specifically for that purpose. Although the catalog was edited by Mark Holborn and designed by Herman Lelie, Brades explains that Turrell had the final say and provided a substantial amount of the materials to be included.¹⁰⁵

Air Mass presented fragments of texts on meteorological phenomena inserted in different places throughout the publication and then, in order: Turrell's two autobiographical stories with illustrations; a vintage postcard of a 604 plane in the air over Taos, New Mexico; two air photos of fields near Hampshire in the U.K.; an anonymous medieval woodcut; an illustration by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry from his famous book *The Little Prince* (1940); a series of photographs and descriptions of Turrell's previous installations; and architectural drawings for his

¹⁰⁴Susan Ferleger Brades, phone interview with author, 24 July 2007.

new show to be installed at the Hayward Gallery in London. The catalog concluded with a description and a series of 30 photographs of the *Roden Crater*. The essays describe Turrell's relation to Quakerism, his father, flying, meteorology, planes, and birds. Meticulously paired images and texts suggest a narrative that helps construct the conceptual foundations of Turrell's work. They provide substantial biographical information important to this context.

The first text published in *Air Mass* is a set of shorter definitions of air masses, referencing the title of the show and the publication. The quotations derive from different sources on meteorology and explain air masses as effects of the planet's rotation. As the Earth moves in a circular motion, it creates regions of discontinuity in the water and the atmosphere, or fronts.¹⁰⁶ This discussion is followed by the two autobiographical stories.

Turrell poetically describes his childhood memories in the two essays, "Night Curtain" and "Early Flight," that pay particular attention to his father Archibald Milton Turrell. In his characteristically poetic and narrative way, Turrell portrays his father "Archie" as an aeronautical engineer with a genuine interest in all forms of aviation,

¹⁰⁵Ibid.

¹⁰⁶A warm front is therefore defined as a boundary of relatively warm air advancing into an area of colder air. An occluded front

particularly the aviation of birds. Turrell's father went so far in his interest as to construct an extension to their house from which he could call the birds, communicate with and feed them as they appeared at the windows. It was this room that later became his son's room, although James had to "surrender it" to his father when it was time for the elder Turrell to communicate with the birds. According to Turrell, his father imitated the birds' sounds and established a dialog with them, and literally taught the mockingbirds a song or two.¹⁰⁷

He recalls how his father, as a teacher, not only taught students how to build an airplane, but also literally had them construct one, and how a general interest in astronomy in the city of Pasadena was rather significant:

In my youth there was the considerable presence of astronomy in Pasadena. On Mount Wilson was the Hale Observatory. The huge 200 inch telescope of the Palomar Observatory was being created at Cal Tech in Pasadena at that very time. I went to school with the daughter of Horace Aubrey, the head of Mount Wilson-Palomar. Even my elementary school was named after the astronomer George Ellery Hale. There was considerable public interest in deep space.¹⁰⁸

The aviation class was one of the most popular at Pasadena Junior College. In 1938, students constructed and built a plane, which could maintain a speed of up to 170

is the line along which a cold front has overtaken a warm front at the ground. Turrell, *Air Mass*, 33.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., 11.

miles-per-hour when fully loaded. It could carry four adults and 100 pounds of baggage, had a heating and air conditioning system, but consumed very little fuel. Today the Harlow PJC-2 is owned by one of Turrell's father's students, a professional airline pilot who flies it privately.¹⁰⁹ His father's teaching philosophy is acknowledged by a drawing of the Harlow PJC-2 made by Turrell and included in the exhibition catalog (fig. 24). Whereas Turrell's father was fascinated with engineering and aeronautical constructions of all sorts, Turrell (as a child) was much more interested in building boats. With his father's help, he constructed boats and then sold them. He explains:

You often react to a strong parent. So, when my father was alive, I had no interest in aviation, no interest in that side of things whatsoever. What I did was build boats. I made them out of wood, and he helped and supported me financially in my projects [...] It was only after my father's death that I became interested in aircraft and flying.¹¹⁰

When his father died, Turrell inherited his father's aircraft manuals and began teaching himself how to restore vintage planes. At the age of seventeen, he had acquired a pilot's license and he supported himself during the early

¹⁰⁸Ibid.

¹⁰⁹James Turrell, "Night Curtain," in Turrell, *Air Mass*, 11.

¹¹⁰Craig Adcock, conversation with Turrell, September 1986, quoted in Adcock, 3.

days of his artistic career by flying and repairing old planes.¹¹¹

The day his father died, Turrell had a distinct feeling of the air in the room changing. He describes this as comparable to a shift of consciousness. Following this significant moment, Turrell had another profound experience. Opening the window, he heard a mockingbird outside singing his father's song.¹¹² A woodcut, described only as an anonymous medieval print, follows the autobiographical texts. Not insignificantly, it conveys a similar shift of consciousness (fig. 25). Like a curtain separating two worlds, a figure is depicted crossing over a dividing line between an earthly realm and entering into a second, cosmic sphere. The upper world resembles the lower in many ways, though it appears much more attractive and spectacular than its earthly counterpart. The woodcut is sometimes called the *Flammarion Woodcut* because its first documented appearance was in Camille Flammarion's *L'Atmosphère: Météorologie Populaire* (1888). In Flammarion's book the caption explains, "A missionary of the Middle Ages tells that he had found the point where the sky and the Earth touched."¹¹³ Flammarion's

¹¹¹Ibid.

¹¹²Turrell, *Air Mass*, 12.

¹¹³Camille Flammarion (1842-1925) was a French astronomer who maintained a private observatory at Juvisy-sur-Orge, France, and wrote extensively on astronomy and meteorology. He was also interested in spiritualism and reincarnation. It is possible Turrell took the print from Flammarion's book, or perhaps from the cover of the popular book on the history of science, Daniel

accompanying text states in part: "What, then, is this blue sky, which certainly does exist, and which veils from us the stars during the day?"¹¹⁴ Turrell's works make use of what might be thought of as perceptual "veils" where the eye slowly zooms in and out between the outside and the inside light and is fooled to perceive a sheet of glass or veil where there in fact is none.

Air Mass also included some of Turrell's notes from the time he worked at the Art and Technology Project (1968). In these texts Turrell pointed to meditative practices introduced in the west and his experiences of the cultural differences between east and west. As a westerner trying to adopt eastern philosophies, he notes:

Our culture is going through a strange time - looking at eastern thoughts - their work with meditation, their sense of the body, mind and soul. We're approaching it through psychology. We are very physical. When we want to go into a universe, we can't look at a stone like the Japanese, we have to literally go to the moon. We're so literal.¹¹⁵

The *Flammarion Woodcut* discussed above also reflects the eastern influences on Quakerism in California, mentioned previously in the quote by Manousis.

J. Boorstin's *The Discoverers* (New York: Random House, 1983), which Turrell may have read. Camille Flammarion, *L'Atmosphère: Météorologie Populaire* (Paris, 1888), 163.

¹¹⁴Flammarion, rpt. Camille Flammarion, *The Atmosphere*, trans. James Glaisher (New York: Harpers and Brothers, 1879).

¹¹⁵Livingston and Tuchman, rpt. in Turrell, *Air Mass*.

The shift between one level of perceptual experience and another seen in the Flammarion woodcut is similarly implicit in Antoine de Saint-Exupéry's drawing from *The Little Prince*, written in 1940 only a few years prior to Turrell's birth in 1943. In the essay "Early Flight" published in *Air Mass*, Turrell explains how his earliest recollections of flying were indirect and secondary experiences of flight described in Saint-Exupéry's *Night Flight* (1931) and *Wind, Sand and Stars* (1939). The French author's fascinating descriptions of flying an airplane delivering mail between Toulouse, France, and Dakar, Algeria, prompted Turrell's initial imaginary journeys through air masses and atmospheric layers of light and space. Saint-Exupéry described navigating through the sky following the light densities of the clouds, the stars at night.

The untitled illustration in the text, however, doesn't originate from *Night Flight* or *Wind, Sand and Stars* (fig. 26). The drawing is from *The Little Prince*, depicting him in the midst of cleaning out his three volcano craters (two active and one extinct) on Asteroid B-612. The text accompanying the drawing derives from the book: "He carefully cleaned out his active volcanoes."¹¹⁶ At this point in the text, Saint-Exupéry writes about the little

prince traveling from one planet to another while taking "advantage of the migration of a flock of wild birds."¹¹⁷ Following the flight of the birds, the little prince presumably flies on the streams of air, similar to a pilot's soaring in a plane.

Before leaving Asteroid B-612, the little prince cleans out his volcanoes. Environmentally aware of the consequences of pollution and the resulting destruction of our planet, Saint-Exupéry uses the volcanoes as metaphors for possible natural catastrophes: "On our earth we are obviously much too small to clean out our volcanoes. That is why they bring no end of trouble."¹¹⁸ The associations to Turrell's *Roden Crater* project are obvious (fig. 27). The most commonly featured photographs of the artist show him in the isolated desert in front of the extinct volcano *Roden Crater*, on which he has been working for over thirty years (fig. 28).

On the very first page of *The Little Prince*, Saint-Exupéry recollects some childhood memories that are particularly pertinent to the discussion of Turrell's work. Saint-Exupéry's recalls how grown-ups largely misunderstood him as a six-year-old child. Inserting his own drawings into the text, Saint-Exupéry describes how he was fascinated by a book about the primeval forest that explained how bo

¹¹⁶Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, *The Little Prince*, trans. Katherine Woods (Orlando, Florida: Harcourt Brace & Company, 1943), 39, rpt. Turrell, *Air Mass*.

¹¹⁷Saint-Exupéry, 38.

constrictors swallow their prey whole. Unable to move, the boa constrictors have to sleep for six months until the food is digested. He explains how he pondered this deeply and then sat down and created his first drawing (fig. 29). Showing it to the adults, he asked them if they found it frightening, only to have them question why they should be scared of a hat. They did not see that it was a boa-constrictor digesting an elephant. Following was a second attempt to draw it more clearly (fig. 30):

The grown-ups' response, this time, was to advise me to lay aside my drawings of boa constrictor, whether from the inside or outside, and devote myself instead to geography, history, arithmetic and grammar. That is why, at the age of six, I gave up what might have been a magnificent career as a painter.¹¹⁹

Turrell's statement in "Early Flight" shows a similar frustration with adults' set rules and perceptions:

My interest in flight, the journey and the sky is not much different from the Peter Pan syndrome of many artists. We do not wish to grow up because we want to have a life where the imagined can be as "real" as that which is commonly agreed upon as reality.¹²⁰

Referencing childhood as a particularly pure experience of the world as it is, Saint-Exupery and Turrell both prompt us to reconnect with the child in ourselves and consider reality as something that can be variously imagined.

¹¹⁸Ibid.

¹¹⁹Ibid., 3-4.

¹²⁰Turrell, *Air Mass*, 15.

The conceptual puzzle (hat versus boa constrictor) presented in *The Little Prince* is in some ways similar to Turrell's much more minimal and perceptual challenge to our habits of seeing. Turrell's placement of illusionary geometrical shapes in front of us, as in for example Turrell's series of "Skyspaces" (fig. 1), questions our ability to perceive and renew our experience of a given phenomenon without drawing upon our established perceptions of what we already know. Our eyes "zoom" back and forth between the possibility of perceiving a solid form or an ethereal light. A perceptual confusion results, similar to the one described in *The Little Prince*, where the question alternates between the drawing as representing a boa constrictor or a hat. Though Antoine de Saint-Exupery uses a flat and schematic form and Turrell an illusionary three-dimensional one, both intend to draw attention to our learned and potentially multiple ways of perceiving. It is the perceptual "shift" between one form and the other, that Turrell urges us to register as he guides us through changes of light sources, similar to the changes of nature's light while flying.

In *Air Mass*, Turrell continued to pair descriptions of meteorological phenomena with descriptions of his installations for the exhibition. His quotes described how warmer or cooler fronts often move and collide, creating

severe weather changes when a front passes.¹²¹ In "Early Flight" Turrell explained how pilots can ride on these shifts of temperature (or air masses) when they fly without power from the engine. Turrell's favorite way of flying is this "soaring" where he rides on the air streams throughout take off, flight, and landing.¹²² "Soaring flight," Turrell claimed, "is like that of the hawks, buzzards and eagles"¹²³ and moving through layers of air, fully observing the light and colors as they shift, the pilot transports himself through passages of light. Juxtaposing the definitions of the different fronts, Turrell implied the shifts in air masses and wind experienced through flight are similar to the "perceptual passages" shifting from one retinal experience to another in his installations.

The "Air Mass" exhibition included three installations: *Wedgework IV*, *Trace Elements*, and *Air Mass*. The installation *Wedgework IV* (1993) (fig. 31) was paired with the definition of a warm front in the book, described as: "A boundary of relatively warm air, advancing into an area by colder air."¹²⁴ *Wedgework IV* is part of a series in which the viewer enters into a small constructed "hallway" that appears to be filled with light. Moving through the

¹²¹Ibid., 5.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³Ibid., 11.

¹²⁴Charles and Ruth Laird, *Weathercasting* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1955), rpt. in Turrell, *Air Mass*, 33.

"passage" of colored light, the light from a hidden light source blends with the fluorescent light so that a different "layer" of color emerges in the already colored field. The work derives directly from Turrell's experiences of flying, specifically the pilot's journey through layers of light. Turrell's comparison of passages through changing weather phenomena as movements through "picture planes," similar to passages through consciousness, are key. In "Early Flight" he writes how a "frontal passage signifies entry into another air mass. This weather "picture plane" also brings a visual change in the weather, squall lines, dense curtains of rain and stacking cloud layers."¹²⁵

Turrell presents a similar "picture plane" to the viewer in his design for *Trace Elements* (1993) (fig. 32). This time paired with a definition of a cold front, the quotation directs the viewer towards ethereal experiences before reading Turrell's description of the work or looking at the drawings for the installation. The definition reads: "A boundary of relatively cold air of polar origin, advancing into an area occupied by warmer air, often of tropical origin, is called a cold front."¹²⁶

The installation was divided in two by a partition wall. A rectangular hole in the wall admitted fluorescent light and two tungsten spotlights on the outside, pointed in

¹²⁵ Turrell, *Air Mass*, 18.

the direction of the wall, create a mesmerizing perceptual experience. The sensation is one of seeing what appears to be a solid mass but what is in fact an open space filled with colored light. The partition wall can also be seen as a division between two spaces, one that places the viewer in one space adjacent to another inaccessible one. The division between one space and the other may be metaphorically read as a division between spheres, similar to the one depicted in the medieval woodcut, or perhaps the more personal experience described by Turrell in his story about a shift of consciousness in the room following his father's death.

A similar sense of the outside versus the inside is also at the core of the *Air Mass* installation produced for the Hayward Gallery's Sculpture Courtyard (fig. 33). As a square "Skyspace" with an opening in the ceiling draws the viewer's gaze upwards; thus the "picture plane" has moved towards the actual sky (fig. 34). As discussed in the Introduction, the perceptual experience inside a "Skyspace" derives from a blend of interior fluorescent and exterior natural light sources. Turrell explains:

My work is more about your seeing, than it is about my seeing, although it is a product of my seeing. I am also interested in the sense of presence of space; that is a space where you feel a presence, almost an entity - that physical presence and power that space can give.¹²⁷

¹²⁶Charles and Ruth Laird, rpt. in Turrell, *Air Mass*, 39.

¹²⁷Brown, rpt. Turrell, *Air Mass*, 44.

This quote follows Turrell's story in *Air Mass* about his experience of his father's death and the "change of air" in his childhood room, implying a connection between the two.

Yet, *Air Mass* also resembles the Orange Grove Meeting House in several ways. Both are square with benches for visitor use. While seated facing each other, viewers may experience a blend of light, some deriving from the inside of the chamber, some from the outside. The built-in benches in *Air Mass* echo the outside benches built into the porch leading into Orange Grove Meeting House (fig. 35). The light source placed in the center of Orange Grove has now been replaced by an opening pointing directly towards the sky. The window facing the sky creates a clear line of division between the interior and the exterior space, much like the division metaphorically represented in the medieval print reprinted in *Air Mass*. The window is also intended to function metaphorically. Turrell explains:

I wanted a visual confrontation between the physical seeing and spaces that created an experience of seeing, familiar to us beyond our conscious-awake state, only we had never experienced it that way. This would be a seeing where the space of the sky would be brought in contact with the space we were in [...] The sky would no longer be out there, away from us, but in close contact. This plumbing of visual space through the conscious act of moving feeling out through the eyes became analogous to a physical journey of self as a flight of soul through the planes.¹²⁸

Turrell built the structure *Air Mass* about the same time as he became interested in creating a new series of work "Lapsed Quaker Ware," which he developed with another "lapsed" Quaker, the Irish potter and ceramicist Nicholas Mosse (discussed in Chapter 4). Following the exhibition, the Skyspace *Air Mass* was reconstructed in more durable materials in Kilkenny, Ireland.¹²⁹

The public's response to the exhibition "Air Mass" was enthusiastic, according to the curator. Many of the gallery's visitors came to see the exhibition of O'Keeffe's work, and by coincidence came upon Turrell's works in the other galleries and found it "a revelation." Visitors would line up in order to be able to experience the installations and stay for hours inside the "Skyspace" to experience the light. The London television station Channel 4 filmed the changes of the light inside the "Skyspace" from dawn until dusk, and Brades still meets people to this day who say that Turrell's "Air Mass" was the best show they have ever seen and that it changed their lives.¹³⁰

The book *Air Mass*' open-ended and poetic prose about childhood stories and experiences of flying similarly guides the reader into shifting passages of time. Its implied

¹²⁸Turrell, *Air Mass*, 18.

¹²⁹Susan Ferleger Brades, phone interview with author, 24 July 2007.

¹³⁰Ibid.

narrative allows the reader to experience the texts and work in a fluid way. Whether affording an actual opening in an architectural structure, a hole in a partition dividing an interior space in two, an ethereal passage through imaginary layers of light, or a completely conceptual passage in time, Turrell's work is intended to create experiences of shifts in the viewer's consciousness. The "window" or "picture plane" constitutes the basis for the perceptual experience.

It is possible to see Turrell's open-ended "teachings" as inspired by his father's practice of vocational guidance, but also as tied to his interest in Fox's allegory of the light within as resembling the light without. Given his California Quaker background and the fact that both of his parents were teachers, it is not so surprising that Turrell likens the work of an artist to the work of an enlightened Boddhisattva:

The idea of the Boddhisattva, one who comes back and entices others on the journey, is to some degree the task of the artist. It is a different role from that of one who is there when you get there. The Boddhisattva entices you to enter that passage, to take the journey. This is where I began to appreciate an art that could be a non-vicarious act, a seeing whose subject was your seeing.¹³¹

Turrell takes us through layers of light that (to him) represent consciousness, a journey, through our senses, through our perceptions, intended to lead to a better understanding of ourselves, and our being. In Turrell's

case, the journey is also a personally, politically, and spiritually driven journey.

¹³¹Turrell, *Air Mass*, 17.

Chapter 2: Perceptual Cells - Inside the Box

Turrell began to create the series "Perceptual Cells" in 1992 at the age of forty-nine. These structures in which the viewer is enclosed in a small and narrow space are intended to provoke initial sensations of fear and claustrophobia, followed by release and elation. They were inspired by the artist's experience of being imprisoned in 1966 as a result of his work as a draft resistance counselor.¹³²

Turrell was only seventeen years old when he volunteered for the draft as conscientious objector. As a pilot, his alternative service involved flying for an air-transport agency collaborating with the CIA.¹³³ Turrell flew small planes from Laos into Indochina,¹³⁴ and took part in the rescuing of Tibetan monks in 1960-1961.¹³⁵ In 1965, he received a BA in perceptual psychology from Pomona College, and was enrolled in the Masters program at the University of California, Irvine, when he became involved with draft counseling at the Orange Grove Meeting House and was imprisoned.¹³⁶ He was sentenced in 1966 and sent to federal

¹³²Alison Sara Jacques and Jiri Svestka, eds., *James Turrell*, exh. cat. (Madrid: la Caixa, 12 November 1992-10 January 1993), 57.

¹³³Tomkins, 66.

¹³⁴James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007.

¹³⁵Tomkins, 66.

¹³⁶David Pagel, "James Turrell Turns on the Light," *LA Times*, 21 October 2007, F1.

prison in Oklahoma.¹³⁷

During the two years Turrell spent in jail, he experienced the brutality of guards and inmates at first hand. As an attempt to escape the physical and mental violence inside the prison, Turrell sought ways to be "disciplined" with solitary confinement. In fact, solitary confinement was more like a refuge to the young Turrell.¹³⁸ Experiences of anxiety, violation of personal freedom, submission to institutional power, and penitentiary control from which the only "escape" was taking refuge in the mind, subsequently inspired Turrell to build the series "Perceptual Cells," each with only room enough for one viewer at a time. Turrell's experiences of solitary confinement additionally stimulated his already informed interest in phenomenology (the study of perceptual, bodily, and psychological realizations and their immediate correlation to the surrounding environment).¹³⁹

This chapter will consider Turrell's series of "Perceptual Cells" in relation to the artistic and socio-cultural context of the 1960s and 70s. The artist's use of Minimalist forms will be considered in relation to his interest in and response to the following: environmental psychology; Marcel Duchamp's 1965 retrospective in Pasadena

¹³⁷James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007.

¹³⁸Jacques and Svestka, 57.

¹³⁹Ibid.

featuring works that implicitly questioned modernism's definitions of art while pointing to their institutional context; and John Cage's performance pieces based on experiences of sound in an anechoic chamber. Turrell's investigations into light and collaboration with artist Robert Irwin and scientist Edward Wortz during the Art and Technology Project (A&T project), which led to this series, will also be analyzed in relation to his Quaker background and the opposition to the Vietnam War that led to prison and solitary confinement.

The Socio-Political Context: The Vietnam War

The impact of the Vietnam War (1954-1975) on the 1968-generation was for some, including Turrell, life changing.¹⁴⁰ It began as a conflict (and was never a declared war) between the Communist government of North Vietnam and the U.S. allied government of South Vietnam. The first U.S. troops entered Vietnam in March 1965. By 1969, U.S. involvement had escalated to consist of 500,000 U.S. military personal stationed in Vietnam. It has been estimated that as many as 2 million Vietnamese, 200,000

¹⁴⁰The political revolts of 1968 took place around the globe, from Berkeley to Berlin, Buenos Aires to Cairo, Tokyo to Cape Town. Students and intellectuals formed a counterculture movement against capitalism, exploitation and colonialist superpowers with issues such as civil rights, pacifism, and peace as key goals. Carole Fink, Philip Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds., 1968, *The World Transformed* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 1-30.

Cambodians, 100,000 Laotians, and 58,000 Americans were killed during the Vietnam War.¹⁴¹ An uncensored press delivered the news from Vietnam on television with raw and unrestricted images of the atrocities, including very disturbing photographs of the U.S. military's use of chemical weapons, Agent Orange, the My Lai massacre of civilians, and children running from U.S. napalm bombings in remote Vietnamese villages.¹⁴²

By 1964, a growing opposition was forming on college campuses and at universities around the world and within three years polls showed the majority of the American population was opposed to the Vietnam War.¹⁴³ The opposition organized draft cards to be returned to the Justice Department, or even burnt during anti-war demonstrations, the largest of which took place in 1967 at the Lincoln Memorial, Washington D.C., where as many as 100,000 demonstrators attended and 30,000 later marched to the Pentagon for an overnight vigil.¹⁴⁴

The Quaker Opposition

¹⁴¹Lucy R. Lippard, ed. *A Different War: Vietnam in Art*, exh. cat. (Bellingham, Washington: Whatcom Museum of History and Art; Seattle: The Real Comet Press, 1990), 1.

¹⁴²R. B. Smith, *An International History of the Vietnam War* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982).

¹⁴³John C. McWilliams, *The 1960s Cultural Revolution* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 2000), 47-61.

¹⁴⁴Ibid.

The Quaker community played a considerable role in the opposition to the Vietnam War. As conscientious objectors--following the early Quaker's Peace Testimony, "A Declaration from the harmless and innocent people of God, called Quakers" (1660) to the English King Charles II--Quakers in the late 1960s refused to pay taxes for the war, returned their draft cards, organized and participated in peace vigils and demonstrations. They called for non-violent resolutions to all conflicts.¹⁴⁵

In 1965, the *Friends Journal* reported a revival in their faith with a whole new generation of believers in nonviolence attending Quaker Meetings and involved with the civil rights movement. Some young men aged fifteen to twenty came to the Meeting Houses directly from Vietnam. Different from the previous generation of non-violent Quaker activists working behind the front, these young men had often experienced war at close hand. The older generation reflected on their bravery in their now non-violent resistance and responses to authorities. Edmund P. Hillpern, for example, a psychoanalyst from New York City, wrote about this new nineteen-sixties generation of objectors:

They talk about the next battle they will face in a few days or weeks. The vague future has changed to a grim but clear here and now. The young leaders know how to stand firm against a jeering crowd, hostile police, a miserable jail.

¹⁴⁵Ibid.

They know what it means to encounter hate, ignorance, prejudice, suspicion. They know how it feels to lose friends, to be labeled as subversive, maladjusted, irresponsible. They remember how many times they felt hopeless—how dangerously close they came to giving in to the impulse of violence and vengeance. They understand their heavy responsibility to uphold the high principle of nonviolence at all costs.¹⁴⁶

It was in this atmosphere that Turrell volunteered to work as a draft counselor for the Quaker community. Having served in the army, and then opposed the war, Turrell was (in the spirit of the men described by Hillpern) not afraid of doing exactly what seemed right to him.

One of the most radical protest against the Vietnam War was taken by the 32-year old Quaker and Executive Secretary of the Baltimore Monthly Meeting, Norman R. Morrison, who burnt himself to death in front of the Pentagon in November 1965.¹⁴⁷ The *Friends Journal* discussed the event in several articles and printed an essay Morrison had brought to the editors only four days before his death. Morrison's writings express his Quaker views in both a philosophical and poetical manner:

Many of us strive toward a deeper level. We find ourselves asking profound, basically religious questions. One of the old questions that have haunted me is "What is man?" When I am sufficiently humbled the answer comes back:

¹⁴⁶Edmund P. Hillpern, a psychoanalyst, member of New York Monthly Meeting, *Friends Journal* 11, No. 2 (15 January 1965): 29-30.

¹⁴⁷Baltimore Monthly Meeting is the official name of the Quaker group/Society of Friends in Baltimore.

"Something between the far reaches of the universe and an atom of sand."¹⁴⁸

Morrison's reflection on how the human being is everything between the "far reaches of the universe and an atom of sand" corresponds with the Quaker (and Turrell's) credo of the inside universe as shaped in the mirror of the outside cosmos, where even the smallest particle is of importance in the larger picture and reflects the micro/macro structure of the wide and infinite universe.

Quaker Resistance in Pasadena

The Orange Grove Meeting in Pasadena was active against the Vietnam War and organized silent vigils before the local post office every Wednesday. The first vigil was organized by the Quaker activist Robert Vogel (1917-1998), who had been a conscientious objector during World War II and arrived in Pasadena in 1946 as the new Peace Education Secretary and Director of the American Friends Society Committee-sponsored Institute of International Relations at Whittier College (fig. 36).¹⁴⁹ Vogel was known as a low-key, yet inspiring mentor of the Quaker youth. He was a pedagogical role model who (in stark contrast to the Conservative Quakers) would attend Meetings often wearing colorful Hawaiian shirts. His lively story telling included

¹⁴⁸Norman R. Morrison, "Two Drops of Water," *Friends Journal* 11, No. 23 (1 December 1965): 582.

¹⁴⁹Manousos, 173.

a humorous act with an imaginary flea, which he often performed for the youngest members in order to draw them in.¹⁵⁰

Accounts in remembrance of Vogel reflect a lifelong commitment to and work for tolerance and peace. During the Vietnam War, for example, Vogel steadily showed up every week in front of the post office. Quaker Jamie Newton recalls:

Week after week, year after year, we stood in silent worship before the post office, attempting to communicate a simple message of compassion. Derision by passersby was not unusual. Once a critic leaned close to Bob Vogel's face and asked aggressively, "Don't you have anything better to do than stand here?" Bob stepped out of the line, touched the man's arm, and gently replied, "No. I don't have anything better to do than to stand here and call for peace." [...] For Bob Vogel, peacemaking was indeed a way of life.¹⁵¹

Vogel organized the first Peace March in Los Angeles (1960).¹⁵² His passion for peace activism and civil rights coupled with a good sense of humor made him a role model for

¹⁵⁰Keith Newton, San Francisco Yearly Meeting, "Friends' Memorials" from "A Life in Service: In Memory of Bob Vogel," The American Friends Service Committee homepage, <http://www.quaker.org/fb/quakes/index.html>, accessed 18 June 2007.

¹⁵¹Jamie Newton, Palo Alto Meeting, "Friends' Memorials" from "A Life in Service: In Memory of Bob Vogel," The American Friends Service Committee homepage, <http://www.quaker.org/fb/quakes/index.html>, accessed 18 June 2007.

¹⁵²Jeanette Norton, Orange County Meeting, "A Life in Service Based on Spiritual Commitment" from "A Life in Service: In Memory of Bob Vogel," The American Friends Service Committee homepage, <http://www.quaker.org/fb/quakes/index.html>, accessed 18 June 2007.

younger Quakers attending the Meeting in the 1960s. James Turrell was one of them.¹⁵³

As a twenty three-year-old man, Turrell worked with Vogel, advising the younger men about conscientious objection to the war.¹⁵⁴ As a pilot, he became involved with the dangerous and illegal transportation of flying conscientious objectors out of the country and into Canada and Mexico.¹⁵⁵ "You might be surprised," he says, "what you say over a period of six months. There was a couple. I took the woman to be the man's mother. She was not. She was an FBI agent."¹⁵⁶ Turrell was misled to believe that the young man had received draft notices from the government:

Everything [the couple] said was in truth a lie, and they just wanted to find me saying one thing -- that I thought he should do this. I was positive I never had, I told my lawyer I never had, and then they had a tape of me out in the parking lot and apparently I said this is what he should do. And that was enough. I was arrested and served time in prison. They essentially convicted me of a treasonable offense.¹⁵⁷

It was this imprisonment that inspired his later development of the "Perceptual Cells" series.

The Vietnam War also affected other members of Turrell's family. His brother David returned from the war

¹⁵³Joe Dmohowski, e-mail correspondence with author referencing correspondence between Dmohowski and de Hartog, 27 May 2007.

¹⁵⁴Pagel, F1.

¹⁵⁵James Turrell, interview by Alison Sarah Jacques, in Jacques and Svestka, 57.

¹⁵⁶Pagel, F1.

¹⁵⁷Ibid.

dramatically changed for the worse. Soon thereafter he was prescribed electrical shock therapy as part of his recovery. Turrell's mother became the caretaker of her older adult son. When her younger son James became involved with draft counseling and was later imprisoned, she was explicitly quite unhappy with him and, reasonably enough, very worried.¹⁵⁸

Turrell was not the only Quaker imprisoned for actions against the War. The minutes from the Orange Grove Meeting refer to much discussion over the ongoing war; members' participation in local and national peace demonstrations; and a weekly antiwar letter workshop organized in the Meeting House. The Peace and Social Action Committee reported on the January business meeting 1966 that they have "sent New Year's greetings and words of encouragement to seventeen men in prison for their conscientious objection to military service."¹⁵⁹ Although not specifically mentioned in the minutes, it is quite possible that one of the prisoners was in fact James Turrell. In October of 1966 the Orange Grove Meeting approved the following statement in their minutes:

We are aware that there is widespread anguish over the war in Vietnam, and that this anguish is shared by Americans, Vietnamese and men of other

¹⁵⁸James Turrell, conversation with author, 15 February 2007.

¹⁵⁹David Morse, ed., *Orange Grove Monthly Meeting - A Centennial Timeline* (Pasadena, California: Orange Grove Monthly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, October 2007), 27.

nations. We share that anguish, and we deplore the fact that the right to protest has been attacked.

We are troubled by governments' reliance upon violence to meet the challenge of social and political change. Firm in the belief that the life of each is sacred to and the dwelling place of the Divine Spirit, we deny the right of any man to take the life of another. We believe that the same morality which forbids a man to kill his neighbor also applies to nations, and forbids the use of war to achieve political aim.

We call upon American political leaders to adopt as their policy the statement that war is no longer a morally or practically defensible instrument of national policy. We believe that the moral greatness of America will rise if the present military adventure is abandoned. We urge leaders of all countries to strengthen and make fullest possible use of all international peace-making machinery. We believe that our government should take the lead in negotiating peace among all the groups concerned in the present war.¹⁶⁰

The Meeting decided to hold a series of meetings with young Friends to consider conscientious objection to the war. A discussion group formed soon thereafter.¹⁶¹

Orange Grove became the center of the Quaker opposition in Pasadena after two Marines, Neil Blanton and Steve Davis, and one soldier, Timothy Springer, went AWOL and took shelter in the Meeting House on December 18, 1968.¹⁶² The lieutenant in charge of the Shore Patrol reportedly sought to avoid entering a religious house to arrest the three, and instead pleaded with the deserters to exit the building voluntarily and submit to the police. However, they decided to remain in the Meeting House, hoping that their stand

¹⁶⁰Ibid., 28.

¹⁶¹Ibid., 29.

would encourage other men to take similar actions against the war. Supporters soon joined them. Robert Vogel reported on the atmosphere inside the Meeting House in *Friends Bulletin*, 1969:

For the first two weeks, throughout the Christmas season, members of Meeting provided hospitality in the Meeting House not only for the three men, but for their supporters as well. The old benches became beds at night; sleeping bags appeared; Friends and others donated food; and a coffee house atmosphere pervaded the Meeting House. But more than that. Beyond the discussions, beyond the bongos and rock music, beyond the problems of life style, there emerged a strange and, as some would call it, a beautiful community, a community of the concerned. Young people who had rejected the Church and religion, found a new dynamic in the silent worship; they discovered Quakerism. Friends discovered in many of these young people a devotion and commitment which was reminiscent of early Friends when the Society actively resisted the authority of the State over their lives and consciences.¹⁶³

An article in *The Los Angeles Free Press* reported that this demonstration wasn't the traditional way Fox would have held Meetings in the seventeenth century, but reflected instead a "flower power" philosophy mixed with more traditional Quaker doctrine. Leonard Brown reported:

On Christmas Eve a rock band, Timeless Evolution, played for a dance in one of the outbuildings, and on Christmas Day the ladies and girls of the Meeting cooked a feast. There were presents for Blanton, Springer and Davis, who do

¹⁶²Manousos, 188.

¹⁶³Vogel's reference to the early Friends refers to the Quaker community as it formed around George Fox in the 17th century. Robert Vogel, "Sanctuary at Orange Grove," *Friends Bulletin*, April 1969, rpt. Manousos, 190.

not expect support from their families in their stand.¹⁶⁴

The minutes from Orange Grove Monthly Meeting describe how other Vietnam veterans stopped by to congratulate the men in their courageous decision to refuse military duty. Resisters would stay over night, some even with very small children. Discussions went on into the wee hours of the night, prompting some members of the Meeting to begin to voice concern about the noise and the rather free-spirited atmosphere.¹⁶⁵ The Meeting continued, however, to accommodate the three and their cohorts. By March 1969, the number of supporters had diminished to ten to fifteen people for dinner every night.¹⁶⁶

Leaving Orange Grove in March 1969, Blanton was sentenced to two years hard labor at Portsmouth, New Hampshire. Before prison, he proceeded to get married under the care of Orange Grove Meeting House.¹⁶⁷ Springer was imprisoned at Fort Ord.¹⁶⁸

Turrell's Experience of Imprisonment

Looking back in 2002, Turrell reflected on his youthful political passion:

¹⁶⁴Leonard Brown, "Finding Refuge in Pasadena," *Los Angeles Free Press* (3 January 1969): 1-2.

¹⁶⁵Orange Grove Monthly Meeting, Record, 2 February 1969. n.p.

¹⁶⁶Orange Grove Monthly Meeting, Record, 2 March 1969. n.p.

¹⁶⁷Morse, 32.

¹⁶⁸It is unknown what happened to Steve Davis. Morse, 32-33.

Everything I was accused of I had done and more. I kind of stewed in my own self-righteousness. I love those bumper stickers that say 'Question Authority,' but you know, authority's going to answer. And self-righteousness does not carry the day. All of that has to do with my own spiritual journey, which has had its ups and downs, to say the least.¹⁶⁹

It is possible that young Turrell's urge to question authority found inspiration in the many examples of Quaker revolt throughout history. The young George Fox, for example, describes his rather self-righteous revolts against priests and church officials in his seventeenth-century *Journals*, which time and time again resulted in imprisonment.¹⁷⁰

Turrell's experiences while in jail formed the basis of his subsequent perceptual cells. He explains:

As a result of things I said as a draft counselor during the Vietnam War, I spent time in the penitentiary, and, to avoid being assaulted or raped, I would do things that got me into solitary. Solitary confinement was not a good thing, but at least there was safety, and I sought to get in there to be safe. Once you are there, it's tough because the cell isn't long enough to lie down or tall enough to stand up; it is meant to be physically confining.¹⁷¹

The cell would appear extremely dark at first, but in this darkness Turrell discovered that there was still some sense

¹⁶⁹Michael Balchunas, "Cosmic Art," *Pomona College Magazine* 39, No. 2 (Winter 2002) n. p.
<http://www.pomona.edu/magazine/PCMWin02/CRTurrell.shtml>, accessed 16 July 2006.

¹⁷⁰Nickalls.

¹⁷¹James Turrell, interview with Alison Sarah Jacques in Jacques and Svestka, 57.

of light. As a way to avoid claustrophobia, his mind began to start wandering:

Even when all the light is gone, you can still sense light. In order to get away from a sense of claustrophobia or the extremeness of the punishment, the mind manufactures a bigger space and it doesn't take long for this to happen. I realize that people who suffer from claustrophobia haven't experienced this; they haven't "gone through" and reached the other side. If you are in an elevator or a place where you feel that you must get out, a way to handle this is to get the mind to build a bigger space and then you are able to reach the other side. For me, it is similar to jumping. I love to do sky diving or parachuting where you actually have a long free fall. People talk about fear in this, but it has nothing to do with fear; it is about elation. Elation is a very different thing, but you have to first experience the fear in order to feel it.¹⁷²

Turrell's *Solitary* (1992) (fig. 37) clearly alludes to this experience. It is a dark sound and light-proof chamber into which only one viewer can fit at a time. Once inside with the door closed, there is no orientation possible in the darkness, much like Turrell's description of the prison cell. Seated on a chair, the viewer can await experiences that after ten to fifteen minutes may begin to take form as the eyes adjust to the darkness and the appearance of a barely perceptible red beam of light. Turrell explains: "There are places in the perceptual cells where it is difficult to define the difference between inside and outside vision, as in *Solitary*, where I would like people to

¹⁷²Ibid.

investigate the seeing that comes from within."¹⁷³ The viewer's eyes are expected to begin to search for visual information and stimuli as the mind loses a sense of time and begins to wonder if the red light is either inside the eyelid or coming from a point outside the physical body.¹⁷⁴ The visual form of a tight enclosure helps prompt the perceptual occurrence. The mind's experiences of the body and its surrounding space (and its possible manipulation of this experience that can lead to a sense of elation) is a life-long interest of Turrell's. He continues to look into theories of perception as an inspiration for developing new work.

Phenomenology and Environmental Psychology

Turrell's experiences in solitary confinement sparked a renewed interest in the body and how it reacts to certain conditions, particularly under pressure. His interest in psychology had already emerged during his undergraduate studies, majoring in psychology, mathematics, and art history at Pomona College in Claremont, California (1961-1965). He became particularly interested in the interdisciplinary field of environmental psychology, which draws

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Peter Noever, ed., *James Turrell: The Other Horizon*, exh. cat. (Vienna, Austria: MAK, 2002), 145.

from work in anthropology, geography, sociology, psychology, history, political science, and architecture.

One of the discipline's earliest theorists, Roger Garlock Barker (1903-1990) was a social scientist and a leading figure in the field by the 1960s, perhaps best known for his observations of distinct human behavioral patterns in different environmental settings. Aiming to explain the experiential relationship between human beings and their social environment, Barker gathered empirical data in the small town of Oskaloosa, Kansas, from 1947 through 1972. He developed a concept of behavior settings, an interface between patterns of behavior and the specific environment, where an individual's behavior responds to their physical environment. A hospital setting, for example, is a place with connotations of medical procedures and a range of physical and psychological treatments. Such an environment may prompt anxiety in the patient who may fall into behavioral patterns as he/she enters the doors. These behavioral patterns in a specific environment begin to develop a certain degree of interdependence where the experience of one exists only due to the experience of the other. Such experiences, called "ecological units," were determined by Barker to have three characteristics. They are self-referential, exist in a specific time and space, and

reflect a clear connection between the behavioral pattern and the external place.¹⁷⁵

Another influential concept of environmental psychology is the anthropologist E.T. Hall's (b. 1914) idea of personal space, defined as "proxemics," which he has explained as "the study of how man unconsciously structures microspace - the distance between men in the conduct of daily transactions, the organization of space in his houses and buildings, and ultimately the layout of his towns."¹⁷⁶ Hall measured four interpersonal zones: 1) intimate, 0 to 18 inches; 2) personal, 18 inches to 4 feet; 3) social, 4 feet to 12 feet; and 4) public, 12 feet and beyond.¹⁷⁷ His studies in the 1930s working and living with Hopi and Navajo cultures on reservations in Arizona, followed by continuous fieldwork in Europe, Asia, and the Middle East, prompted him to conclude that the measured interpersonal distances are culturally determined. His studies of Saudis, Norwegians, Milanese, and Japanese, indicated socially and culturally

¹⁷⁵Although Turrell has never cited Barker specifically, it is highly likely he would be familiar with these theories given his life-long interest in environmental psychology. Interesting also for the discussion of Turrell is Barker's analogy that human behavior is to the ecological environment, as visual perception is to light. In order to comprehend visual perception, you have to understand light, independent from visual perception. See Roger Garlock Barker, *Ecological Psychology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1968), Roger Garlock Barker, *Qualities of Community Life* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1973), and Roger Garlock Barker, *Habitats, Environments, and Human Behavior* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1978).

¹⁷⁶E.T. Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1966), 107-122.

determined differences in their typical interpersonal zones and distances were published in the nineteen sixties.¹⁷⁸

Among the theorists in environmental psychology, Turrell has pointed to James Jerome Gibson (1904-1979) as particularly influential to his thinking.¹⁷⁹ Gibson developed a theoretical perspective on sensory perception, which he defined as ecological psychology. Gibson argued that animals and humans operate in systems related to the environment. To fully explain behavioral systems, he studied the specific environments in which they take place. According to Gibson, perception and action are tightly interwoven and mutually constraining. Stimulation of the retina alone does not lead to perception, and Gibson's later work concentrated on the nature of cognition, emphasizing "real world" studies of behavior as opposed to the artificial environment of a laboratory.¹⁸⁰

When asked about Gibson's theories in relation to his work, Turrell explains them in an almost Biblical way of what we "behold" outside as analogous to the inside, a statement that alludes to Quaker tenets:

The influence [of Gibson's theories] was more of a general ideal in the sense that this world that we behold outside is not exactly altogether outside. I was interested in what all that meant,

¹⁷⁷Ibid.

¹⁷⁸Ibid.

¹⁷⁹Claudia Giannini, ed., *James Turrell, Into the Light*, exh. cat. (Pittsburgh: Mattress Factory, 2002).

¹⁸⁰James Jerome Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1950).

particularly in terms of the visual world, and how that related to art and how we were structuring art. I was intrigued with how we look at that which we behold and the lack of separation between us and that which we behold.¹⁸¹

Though cryptic as a statement, Turrell's continuous use of the word "behold" indicates that the artist sees a tie between the perceptual experiences described in Gibson's theories and religious doctrines. In Turrell's case, it is his own personal experiences of the Quaker allegory referencing the inside as reflecting the outside.

Another powerful influence on Turrell was phenomenology, particularly the work of the French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961). This influence has been discussed by Adcock who pointed to the influence of Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* (first published in French in 1945, and in English in 1962) where he discussed experiencing the world with the senses, perceiving information that is often ambiguous and confusing.¹⁸²

In the *Phenomenology of Perception*, Merleau-Ponty developed a concept of the "body-subject" as an alternative to the Cartesian "cogito." Merleau-Ponty, strongly influenced by Husserl and "transcendental phenomenology," observed that consciousness, the world, and the human body,

¹⁸¹James Turrell, "Interview with Jim Lennox," in Giannini, 40.

¹⁸²Adcock, 34.

are all intricately intertwined in human experience, and the body as a subjective instrument consciously and subconsciously reconstructs phenomena it experiences from its surroundings. Merleau-Ponty claimed that we as human beings do not consciously construct our experiences, but allow them to construct themselves before our eyes. The subjectively perceiving body operates separately from the conscious mind as it engages in the reality in which it also participates.

Two years after Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception* was published in the United States, Gaston Bachelard's (1884-1962) influential *The Poetics of Space* (published in 1958 in French) was translated into English. It was influential on Turrell's thinking in its undertaking of a phenomenological, but also psychological and poetic exploration of the human experience of space. Bachelard links our present experiences of spaces to our past experiences and childhood memories of rooms. The past and present experiences intertwine as we respond differently to, for example, the space in a basement versus that of an attic. Our awareness of the connotation of a place, the previous experiences we might have had in a similar space, all influence our present experience of a given space.¹⁸³

¹⁸³Bachelard writes: "The house acquires the physical and moral energy of a human body. It braces itself to receive the downpour, it girds its loins. When forced to do so, it bends with the blast, confident that it will right itself against time, while

Turrell's series of "Perceptual Cells" incorporate all of the above theories of environmental perception. *Call Waiting* (1997) (fig. 38), a rather austere and clinical light grey metallic chamber with a door commonly used for fire escapes, an interior circular dome, and a keyboard with four buttons inside, removes viewers from the institutional environment of a gallery or museum space and transports them into a setting that alludes to space shuttles, aircrafts, MRIs, and hospital laboratories.

Following Barker's theories of "ecological units," I believe, Turrell consciously aims to trigger viewers' imaginations as he repositions them into an enclosed dark chamber without any contact to the outside world. The darkened space becomes self-referential and is intended to prompt a new awareness of behavioral actions.

The head of the viewer enters the structure's circular dome, a ganzfeld zone, without any orientation markers.¹⁸⁴ Placed in a tightly closed environment in a standing position, the viewer controls the changing light experiences inside the chamber by turning or punching the buttons on the interior instrument panel. Operating within what Hall defined as an "intimate" zone of 0 to 18 inches, the viewer

continuing to deny any temporary defeats. Such a house as this invites mankind to heroism of cosmic proportions. It is an instrument with which to confront the cosmos." Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space, The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places*, trans. Maria Jolas (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1994), 45.

is in control of the experience inside the box. Red and blue neon lights, at times with added strobes, placed inside the dome, create a changing circular color-field in which the intensity of the color varies in response to the viewer's turn of the knobs.

Turrell compares this piece to a phone booth where people can step in to make a call and reconnect with an individual (a different state of mind) far away. He likens the experience to an imaginary and rather empowering transformation as he, not without a good sense of humor, states that:

These works are not too far from the idea of Clark Kent stepping into the phone booth to emerge as Superman. All these spaces share the physical distinction of having thingness, like sculpture or architecture that one enters solely in order to experience. "Cell" as in the single living cell refers to the singularity of experience, to enclosure as in the monk's cell and to the capturing or holding of an experience as in the prison cell; also to the conspirational nature of a secretly shared experience as in the terrorist or political cell.¹⁸⁵

The analogy between a monk's and a prison cell, and a microscopic cell, part of a larger whole, attests to Turrell's interest in creating spaces in which viewers may experience enhanced emotional and physical sensations within a confined closed space.

Turrell's "Perceptual Cells" reflect Hall's interpersonal "zones," which guide the viewer from a social,

¹⁸⁴For a definition of a Ganzfeld, see Introduction, p. 30.

public space into a chamber of intimate and personal space of solitude. These cells also refer to Gibson's exit from the "real world" into an austere and distinctly artificial environment of a laboratory, removed from any external input. The mind may then start looking for visual information as the eyes become accustomed to the darkness, and the viewers can begin to explore the keyboard and experience the cause and effect of their movement of the buttons.

Past and present experiences may begin to intertwine in the perceptual cell. In this way, Turrell transforms his interpretation of Bachelard's and Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological theory as he creates viewer-constructed experiences where he/she can begin to realize the subjectivity of the perceiving mind. Searching for ways to implement parts of these theories and turn them into visual experiences for a viewer to encounter, Turrell was also inspired by artists of his time.

Contemporary Artists' Responses to the Vietnam War

Around 1965, the opposition to the Vietnam War in the art world accelerated. Both east and west coast artists organized in Artists and Writers Protest (New York) and The Artists Protest Committee (Los Angeles). The latter

¹⁸⁵Noever, 142.

demonstrated in front of museums and galleries, and rented a vacant lot in downtown Los Angeles (at the intersection of Sunset and La Cienega Boulevards) to install Mark di Suvero's *Peace Tower*, intended to stand from February 26, 1966 until the end of the Vietnam War (fig. 39).

The tower was a collaborative project designed by diSuvero to comprise 400 panels by artists including Judy Chicago, Philip Evergood, Donald Judd, Eva Hesse, Robert Motherwell, Alice Neel, Louise Nevelson, Ad Reinhardt, James Rosenquist, and Eric Orr among others. On the day of the opening, Leon Golub, Irving Petlin, and Susan Sontag spoke for peace, the end of violence, and the end of war.¹⁸⁶ Mark di Suvero continued to dedicate some of his sculptures to the anti-war movement, entitling them *Flower Power* (1967), *Mother Peace* (1970), and *Homage to the Viet Cong* (1971). In 1970, he moved to Europe in protest against the U.S involvement in Vietnam.¹⁸⁷

The Artists and Writers Protest in New York was involved in local anti-war demonstrations and organized several events, perhaps the most extensive being Angry Arts Week (January 29-February 5, 1967). It included 600 artists in dance, music, film, poetry, and the visual arts. Events took place in galleries, studios, and performance spaces

¹⁸⁶Lippard, 12-13.

¹⁸⁷Ibid., 22.

throughout the city all intended to debate and create awareness of the U.S. violence in Vietnam.

In 1968, Lucy Lippard curated a show at the Paula Cooper Gallery intended as a benefit for the Student Mobilization Against the War. It included primarily Minimalist artists such as Carl Andre, Jo Baer, Donald Judd, Sol LeWitt, Robert Morris, and Robert Ryman.¹⁸⁸ Carl Andre, one of the founders of the Artists Workers' Coalition (AWC) was perhaps one of the most vocal and politically engaged artists. He expressed a clear anti-war position in an interview published in *ArtNews* in 1970, where he compared the U.S. involvement in Vietnam to a more general institutional repression that included museums and universities repressing artists, students, and professors.¹⁸⁹

James Rosenquist's canonical *F-111* (1965) (fig. 40) is perhaps the best-known anti-war work of this period. A large-scale painting featuring canned spaghetti, a girl underneath a hairdryer, a car tire and other fragments taken from glossy magazine clippings camouflage the image of a huge F-111 fighter-bomber ready to drop its bombs.

¹⁸⁸Ibid., 18.

¹⁸⁹Carl Andre stated: "The war in Vietnam is not a war of resources, it is a demonstration to the people of the world that they had better not wish to change things radically because if they do, the United States will send an occupying, punishing force... And they wish to run these quiet apolitical institutions like museums and universities suppressing politics among artists, among students, among professors... We are killing people ostensibly to maintain the rationale of artistic freedom."

Rosenquist used images from popular culture to show his opposition to a growing materialism numbing the American people from actively taking part in the decisions of their country and vigorously questioning the war. First shown in 1965 at the Leo Castelli Gallery, this Pop-art icon was surprisingly soon thereafter also exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.¹⁹⁰

Dan Flavin's sculpture of red neon light entitled *Monument For Those Who Have Been Killed In Ambush (to P. K Who Reminded Me About Death)* (1966), was also a response to the Vietnam War. It was displayed in a corner of Max's Kansas City, a famous bar in Manhattan where Andy Warhol, Carl Andre, Robert Smithson, Mick Jagger, Velvet Underground, and many other artists liked to hang out in the nineteen sixties.

Robert Morris, active in Art Strike on the east coast, made a series of lithographs entitled "Five War Memorials" in 1970 (fig. 41), imaginary Earthworks in the forms of craters after a possible nuclear bombing.¹⁹¹ Eerily similar to Turrell's later *Roden Crater* project, Morris' series was conceived as a response to the Vietnam War and the consequences of U.S. involvement.

Interview with Jeanne Siegel, *Arts Magazine* (November 1970): 175, rpt. Lippard, 22.

¹⁹⁰Lippard, 34-35.

¹⁹¹Ibid., 53.

Finally, Robert Smithson's earthwork, *Partially Buried Woodshed* (1970) (fig. 42), at Kent State University, an old woodshed on campus filled with soil until the structure partially collapsed, became an uncanny monument for the ensuing police shooting and killing of four students during an anti-war demonstration in 1970. A lithograph of Smithson's *Partially Buried Woodshed* was later used as an anti-war poster (fig. 43).¹⁹²

Turrell's antiwar activities took the form of action more than art. He was certainly aware of concurrent art world practices, much as he was aware of the art in his earlier surroundings. It would take years, however, before the influence was directly reflected in his artwork.

The Arts in Pasadena

Turrell's early years in Pasadena included regular visits to the Pasadena Art Museum, one of the few museums in the city which played a significant role in the 1960s. In retrospect, critic Peter Plagens claimed, "you can't underestimate the effect of the museum, not only on the artists who worked in the city during the period covered by this exhibition [*Radical Past: Contemporary Art & Music in*

¹⁹²Ibid., 20.

Pasadena, 1960-1974] but also on the Southern California art world as a whole."¹⁹³ Important California artists, such as Richard Diebenkorn, John Mason, and John McLaughlin, were given solo shows in the early 1960s, and it was here that Turrell had his first show in 1967 where he presented his first projection pieces.

To establish the museum's profile on a national scale, California artists were often shown in exhibitions alternating with shows by east coast artists, including for example, Jasper Johns, Donald Judd, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Motherwell, Kenneth Noland and Frank Stella. Turrell was friends with curator and artist John Coplans, also editor of the then west-coast art magazine *ArtForum*, for which Turrell occasionally designed the front covers.¹⁹⁴

Perhaps the most influential exhibition for Turrell during his formative years was the Marcel Duchamp retrospective in 1963 organized by the museum's director Walter Hopps.¹⁹⁵ Hopps, who had been one of the founding members of the Ferus Gallery in L.A. (with Edward Kienholz in 1957) became the acting director of the Pasadena Museum of Art in 1962 and the museum's director from 1964 to

¹⁹³Peter Plagens, "Crown City Chronicle," in Jacobson, 19.

¹⁹⁴John Coplans, interview with Paul Cummings, Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, Archives of American Art, May 2, 1974, <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/cage74.htm>, accessed August 5, 2006. No specifics were listed as to which of the covers of *Artforum* were designed by Turrell.

¹⁹⁵Jay Belloli, "Lasting Achievements: The Pasadena Art Museum," in Jacobson, 16.

1967.¹⁹⁶ An exhibition of this magnitude of Duchamp's work was quite extraordinary at this time and it attracted a lot of attention, especially from local artists. A story featuring Duchamp playing chess with the model Eve Babitz in the nude, fully visible to passersby through the museum window on 46 North Los Robles Avenue was featured in the printed news.¹⁹⁷

The exhibition included a range of Duchamp's assisted readymades, such as *Bicycle Wheel* (1913) (fig. 44), one of the artist's early works introducing found objects and questioning the concurrent definitions of art as single-handedly produced by an artist. Duchamp's *Fountain* (1917) (fig. 45) even more controversially challenged the parameters of art and what it can be. A urinal turned 90 degrees and signed R. Mutt as a pseudonym for the factory owner producing the work, it was originally submitted to the Society of Independent Artists' annual uncensored exhibition in 1917, and rejected by the exhibition committee.

Perhaps more important works for Turrell were the *Three Standard Stoppages* (1913-14) (to be discussed in Chapter 3) and Duchamp's series of optical "Rotary Wheels" (1920). The *Rotoreliefs* (1935) (fig. 46) consisted of six cardboard discs with colored drawings on both sides. The discs were to be placed on a record player, set in motion, and experienced

¹⁹⁶Suzanne Muchnic, "No More Nutburgers," in Jacobson, 11.

¹⁹⁷Plagens in Jacobson, 20.

while in rotation. Clear instructions explaining the perceptual implications of the work followed: "These discs, turning at an approximate speed of 33 revolutions per minute, will give an impression of depth, and the optical illusion will be more intense with one eye than with two."¹⁹⁸ The catalog entry described the experience of the work as adding a third dimension, its rotation prompting a psychological interpretation of illusionary space.¹⁹⁹ This psychological dimension, derived from a purely perceptually driven illusion, is similar to Turrell's later installations using light.

Turrell's installations have all been visual and optical experiments triggering a perceptual experience inside the viewer. *Call Waiting*, described above, prompts shifting experiences from one dimension to another, moving from an exterior to an interior closed and perceptually numbing experience to an encounter with mechanically changing visual stimuli.

Between 1964 and 1971, the Pasadena Art Museum organized a contemporary music program, the "Encounters Series," inviting a range of new and experimental contemporary composers including John Cage, Olivier Messian, Steve Reich, Arnold Schoenberg, Karlheinz Stockhausen and La

¹⁹⁸It is unclear from the catalog whether these words derive from Duchamp or Hopps. Walter Hopps, ed., *Marcel Duchamp*, exh. cat. (Pasadena, CA: Pasadena Art Museum, 1963), n.p.

¹⁹⁹Ibid.

Monte Young. They presented their work in concerts and lectures at both the Pasadena Museum of Art and California Institute of Technology (Caltech).²⁰⁰ For Turrell, Cage was the most influential. Although he didn't really understand him, he knew intuitively that Cage was important.²⁰¹

Cage's 4'33" performance of silence (performed for the first time in 1952) opened with a pianist entering the stage, opening the keyboard lid of a piano. While measuring time as he slowly read the "notes of silence" on Cage's note sheet, the pianist never touched the piano, nor made a sound on it. In absolute silence, the audience began to hear other outside random noises that (to Cage) were as important as his own silent piece. Cage had initially been thinking about writing a piece of the standard length of canned music to sell to the Muzak Co. Its title was to be "Silent Prayer." In "A Composer's Confessions" (1948) he described the piece as one which "will open with a single idea which I will attempt to make as seductive as the color and shape or fragrance of a flower. The ending will approach imperceptibly."²⁰² The experience Cage intended to generate resembles Turrell's attempts to create puzzling perceptual incidents using light (or darkness) as opposed to sound (or silence). Interestingly, it was visual imagery, or lack

²⁰⁰Jay Belloli, "Lasting Achievements: The Pasadena Art Museum," in Jacobson, 16.

²⁰¹Adcock, 4.

thereof, that had initially inspired Cage's thinking for the piece.

Cage was influenced by Robert Rauschenberg's series of white paintings (1951) on which light and shadows from the surroundings created a circumstantially generated "image." Cage wrote about the canvas as "not empty spaces," but rather "inevitably, you're receptive to the environment, both in terms of the falling of light and in the falling of particles. In my article on Rauschenberg, I say that they are simply airports for particles."²⁰³ In 4'33", Tudor enacted the separate acts by opening and closing the lid of the piano, transferring the experience of played music to silence only interrupted by random sounds in the audience, blended with random sounds from outside the music hall.

Cage was interested in the individual experience of listening and sensing sensations in the body while concentrating on no particular orchestrated sound but rather random noise, an idea that also had its roots in experiments Cage had conducted in an anechoic chamber in 1951 at Harvard University. Enclosed in a completely light- and sound-proof chamber, Cage realized he still heard two sounds, one lower and one higher tone. The engineer explained that the lower

²⁰²James Pritchett, *The Music of John Cage* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 59, 138.

²⁰³John Cage, interview by Paul Cummings, 2 May 1974, The Smithsonian Institution, Oral History <http://www.aaa.si.edu/collections/oralhistories/transcripts/cage74.htm>, accessed 5 August 2006.

tone came from the blood circulating in his veins and the higher tone from the nervous system.

In Cage's case, these experiments went hand in hand with Asian philosophy and particularly Zen Buddhism, which he studied enthusiastically with one of the most influential scholars in Zen and Buddhist philosophy in the United States, Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki who taught at Columbia University between 1952 and 1957. Suzuki's influence on western philosophy is exemplified by his many translations of canonical texts from Japanese, Chinese, and Sanskrit to English, and his many lectures and examinations of Mahayana Buddhism.²⁰⁴ Cage was similarly interested in the *I-Ching*, the Chinese "book of chance," and used chance operated systems as the foundation for most of his own written compositions.

Cage's experiences in an anechoic chamber were a precedent and forerunner for Turrell's and Robert Irwin's investigations with light in an anechoic chamber during the Art and Technology (A&T) Project, discussed later in this chapter.

Other Influences

²⁰⁴See Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (Kyoto: Eastern Buddhist Soc., 1934), republished with foreword by C.G. Jung, (London: Rider & Company, 1948); Daisetz Teitaro Suzuki, *The Zen Doctrine of No-Mind*, (London: Rider & Company, 1949), rpt. (York Beach, Maine: Red Wheel/Weiser, 1972).

In addition to curating the Duchamp exhibition, Walter Hopps also organized and selected the artists for the American delegation to be shown at the 1965 Sao Paolo Biennial. These included Robert Irwin, Donald Judd, Barnett Newman, and Larry Poons. Hopps' selection of primarily west coast artists for the Sao Paolo Biennial of 1965, attracted much attention. Turrell especially admired Barnett Newman's color-field paintings, and Donald Judd's Minimalist sculptural forms in plexiglass, steel, and enamel.

Judd's interest in creating new pieces that weren't sculptures or paintings but three-dimensional work that existed in space, must have interested the young Turrell studying environmental perception and gestalt psychology. In his 1965 essay "Specific Objects," Judd criticized painting: "The main thing wrong with painting is that it is a rectangular plane placed flat against the wall. A rectangle is a shape itself; it is obviously the whole shape; it determines and limits the arrangement of whatever is on or inside of it."²⁰⁵ He added:

A painting is nearly an entity, one thing, and not the indefinable sum of a group of entities and references. The one thing overpowers the earlier painting. It also establishes the rectangle as a definite form; it is no longer a fairly neutral limit. A form can be used only in so many ways. The rectangular plane is given a life span.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁵Judd, "Specific Objects," rpt. Donald Judd, *Complete Writings 1959-1975* (New York: New York University Press, 2005), 181-182.

Turrell's work with light has made use of the rectangular surface associated with the canvas of the traditional painting, and described by Judd in "Specific Objects," only to take the physical form and turn it into something immaterial. Thinking of himself as an artist who shapes and builds with light, Turrell has in many ways drawn on Judd's Minimalist approach, yet interpreting it in his own way. Where Judd used the rectangular solid and, at times, cubical form as a manner of moving his work into a new territory that involved material, volume, and space in a physical object, Turrell reworked the Minimalist paradigm of simplicity into an ephemeral light experience inviting the viewer into a participatory process involving the senses *inside* the form.

The Art and Technology Project

In August 1968, the senior curator at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art (LACMA), Maurice Tuchman, invited Irwin to participate in the Art & Technology (A&T) Project. Irwin was at first skeptical and resistant to the idea of collaborating with commercial enterprises, but soon saw possibilities of developing projects he was unable to produce with the often limited resources he had in his studio. More importantly, the A&T project allowed for collaborations with scientists, in which Irwin might learn

²⁰⁶Ibid.

more about the latest technology and theories in other fields.

At the suggestion of Tuchman, Irwin toured the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation. He was especially interested in an anechoic chamber and the possibilities it offered to conduct experiments inside a dark space, completely free of any sound or any light. Irwin also visited IBM in San Jose with the Nobel-Prize winning physicist Dr. Richard Feynman (1918-1988) of Caltech in Pasadena. The collaborating members of IBM spent two days introducing the artist to the laboratories investigating human responses to extreme physical situations.²⁰⁷

During the summer of 1968, Irwin met the much younger James Turrell who had just returned from prison. The two decided to collaborate and suggested the Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), Pasadena, as their partner. Tuchman worked on a contract with JPL but found they couldn't provide a satisfactory degree of commitment, and instead suggested the two artists work with the Garrett Corporation, a Los Angeles based aerospace company.

In November 1968, the two artists met with Dr. Edward Wortz, Head of the Life Sciences Department in Torrance, California, at a preliminary meeting with Dr. Feynman,

²⁰⁷Feynman was a scientist perhaps best known for expanding the theory of quantum electrodynamics, and particle theory. He joined Julian Schwinger and Sin-Itiro Tomonaga in receiving the Nobel Prize in Physics in 1965.

Tuchman and Livingston. Irwin, Turrell, and Wortz hit it off immediately, and the collaboration developed into a profound friendship. Wortz's expertise in experimental psychology (an approach in psychology that applies scientific investigations and views the discipline as one of the natural sciences) matched the two artists' intuitive experiments in the studio in an uncanny way. The Garret Life Science Department was involved in developing support systems for the astronauts' moon landing, and Wortz's research concerned the implications of a human walking on the moon. The three involved Prof. Jay Dowling and students in psychology from UCLA and developed phenomenological experiments inside an anechoic chamber available at the university. The documentation of the experiments, written by Turrell and included in the report of the A&T program, reflects a connection between the scientific approach and the artists' and scientists' interest in solipsistic experiences, meditation practices, and Zen.²⁰⁸ Not only do the experiments involve meditative states, proposed by Wortz, but Irwin also suggested meditation as part of the experiments inside the chamber.

The perceptual research was initiated in January 1969 and lasted for six months. Following the time of scientific inquiries, the artists were to develop new work for an exhibition at Los Angeles County Museum of Art. The initial

²⁰⁸Livingston and Tuchman, 127-143.

plans for the exhibition included a soundproof dark corridor (found in many of Turrell's later works) leading the viewer into an anechoic chamber where, after a few minutes, visual stimuli would be presented, leaving the two to three visitors inside with an anticipation of something about to happen, followed by their experience of sounds from their own nervous system, or inducing an intuitive meditative state.

Other experiments included use of words without any literary content, categorized in groups, such as object-words, sound-words, action-words, state-of-being words, place-words, sensual-words etcetera. The words would correspond to the experiences in the anechoic chamber, leaving the viewer with the task of experiencing it in his/her individual way: "what we tend to do is to bring you to an awareness of perception, or perceiving yourself perceiving, pressing the information against the senses-making the sense of reality a sense of the senses."²⁰⁹

The artists began a series of investigations, first on themselves, then with volunteer students from UCLA. The experiments included observations of a person's reaction inside an anechoic chamber over different intervals of time. Participants were blindfolded at the entrance into the anechoic chamber and/or spatially disoriented, then experienced strobe light inside the chamber, preferably

violet light so the space wouldn't be identifiable, but would instead generate a perceptual color field on the inside of the eye's retina. Experiments also integrated experiences of low levels of light gradually vanishing inside the chamber, color-tone synesthesia, meditation, and Alpha Conditioning.²¹⁰

Among the detailed and rather elaborate notes on the nature of the investigations during the A&T project, all written by Turrell, we find skeptical comments on the scientific inquiries:

I don't know that anything really startling came out of the whole thing...I sometimes feel I've found some things out, but they don't apply to anyone else unless they come to them in the same way... If either art or technology becomes a religion, maybe this stuff will start getting more exciting. There's got to be an Art and Technology Christ...²¹¹

Turrell's spiritual inclinations were clear. Pure science or art for art's sake wasn't enough for Turrell. There had to be a larger meaning behind the perceptual investigations. That these investigations were tied to Quakerism and the New Testament is evident in his comment about an Art & Technology Christ. While in Japan, he continued to delve further into his spiritual interest, exploring Buddhism and Zen.

²⁰⁹Ibid., 132.

²¹⁰Alpha conditioning is a meditative state measurable by the cycles of the brain's waves. An alpha state appears between cycles of twelve and eight waves per second.

²¹¹Livingston and Tuchman, 140.

When the Art and Technology project was exhibited at the Japan Expo in 1970, Turrell traveled to Tokyo and stayed in Sam Francis' (1925-1994) loft. Trained as a pilot in the U.S. air force, Francis invited Turrell in 1970 to collaborate with him on a drawing rendered in the sky using airplanes. The performance was part of an artists' event in Pasadena called "Easter Sunday in Brookside Park," organized by Oliver Andrews, Judy Gerowitz (later Chicago), and Lloyd Hamrol. Francis and Turrell worked out a scenario for the piece, hired a skywriting company, and orchestrated two radio controlled World War I biplanes to create the work (fig. 47).²¹²

Francis' Japanese father-in-law explained the premises of traditional Japanese gardens to Turrell. Turrell was particularly fascinated with the idea of a miniature world of plants and rocks resembling the larger outside cosmos.²¹³ The windows in the tea rooms used for tea ceremonies serve to frame the outside landscape and in a sense bring the exterior into the interior, thus reuniting the visitor with the cosmos outside. The framing of the sky is also important in the layout of a traditional Japanese garden. Landscape architects Mitchell Bring and Josse Wayembergh explain:

It includes careful screening of the sky seen above. Overhanging building eaves, large clipped trees, and special "picture windows" located within the garden serve this purpose. Just as

²¹²Willoughby Sharp, "Rumbles," *Avalanche I* (Fall 1970): 2-3.

²¹³Turrell, *Air Mass*, 19.

space is an element in painting composition, sky is considered a major element in garden composition and must be carefully considered. Too much sky makes the garden unbalanced—too much heaven and not enough earth, too much yang and not enough yin. Unlimited sky also suggests an endless vista that is not in keeping with Japanese feelings about nature.

The "picture window" presents the most obvious connection between gardening and landscape painting: It selects a view and presents it as if it were a painting.²¹⁴

The idea of the outside cosmos resembling the inside cosmos in Zen, as in Quakerism, was here physically represented in traditional Japanese gardens. As an experiential journey walking through paths in the gardens, or through corridors from building to building, Japanese gardens presented a holistic approach, a mirror of a micro/macro cosmos. Something that at first appeared to be one thing might in fact turn into something entirely different, or be both things at the same time. Turrell described his experiences:

I originally visited a garden near Izumu. After sitting for some time I went to the toilet. It was a low toilet over which you squatted. Then, I noticed at eye level a small triangular window, which provided another view of the garden. The view opened onto the same part of the garden as a larger window above, except the view was scaled down. The small rocks appeared as mountains, blades of grass became wooded hillsides and the *bonsai* looked like large trees. The microcosm had become a macrocosm, which perfectly echoed the motifs and forms of the larger view. I then realized that the garden should be viewed from numerous vantage points. The garden assembled a

²¹⁴Mitchell Bring and Josse Wayembergh, *Japanese Gardens, Design and Meaning* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1981), 181.

universe of seeing, enabling you to pass from microcosm to macrocosm and back.²¹⁵

Turrell found similar "riddles" in Japanese koans, short sentences or stories used by Zen masters to prompt their students to reflect on the circumstances they are simultaneously part of and surrounded by. Not for the logical mind to grasp, koans are intended as exercises to be holistically "understood" and entered using a clear meditative and intuitive state of mind.²¹⁶

While Turrell would have had little if any visual conventions from his Quaker roots to draw from, other than the traditional architectural aesthetics and the figurative paintings by Edward Hicks, Zen represented a new (to him) sparse and simple aesthetic that was highly focused on the idea of living with an enhanced sense of being. Zen reflected the eastern perception of "things" as connected to the spiritual, rather than material. Following his stay in Japan, Turrell began to consider the artist as a Bodhisattva, a person with a highly developed intuition and understanding of the spiritual journey, returning cosmos to Earth to assist others in their path towards enlightenment.²¹⁷

²¹⁵Turrell, *Air Mass*, 19.

²¹⁶Isshu Miura, *The Zen Koan: Its History and Use in Rinzai Zen* (New York: Harcourt Brace & World: 1965).

²¹⁷Turrell, *Air Mass*, 17.

The "Perceptual Cells"

Turrell's early work *Alien Exam* (1991) (fig. 48) marked a transition from his open installations to the enclosed boxlike structures to emerge in the late series "Perceptual Cells." It required the viewer to enter into a controlled and austere clinical setting where he/she was supposed to lie down on what appears to be a hospital stretcher. An outside instructor, dressed in a medical gown, would mechanically raise the bed up to a point where the viewer's head became enclosed in a circular dome. In the dome, a series of changing light sequences began to take place. These were all operated from an exterior control room, and the allusion to a hospital environment where the viewer is subject to odd and unfamiliar instruments was a predominant element. Removing the viewer from the ground and literally replacing a clear sense of having "both feet on the ground" with a much more vulnerable supine position was intended to evoke a sense of anxiety and loss of control, followed by sensations of release and elation as the viewer refocused on the changing light experiences inside the dome.

This work is tied to the encounters with light Turrell experienced during his imprisonment, but possibly also to his personal experiences of having been diagnosed and

treated for melanoma.²¹⁸ The sense of a mental "escape" from the controlled environment, both alluding to Turrell's hospital and prison experiences, repositions his development of the "Perceptual Cells." The fact that many of the installations suggest a medical setting is not accidental. Turrell likens them to hospital settings that include a "ritual of a waiting room."²¹⁹ Turrell's personal illness and cancer treatment²²⁰ is partially the inspiration behind the work:

I'm interested in the physicality of light, in our being irradiated by it, almost like a treatment. I know what our treatments are like for cancer, but, during my experience of this, I found it strangely uninteresting. I was not able to sense anything; I felt that there was nothing being done to me. They push you through large machines - one part of your body at a time. Obviously, you do realize that something is happening, but you cannot define what it is. I like this quality of submission - this lying down and being treated. As human beings, we do drink light in the form of vitamin D through the skin, so we are literally light eaters. We orientate to light and have problems if we don't have it - psychological as well as physical. Taking all the cells, you end up with white light, putting all that light together, it's a full treatment.²²¹

²¹⁸Although the information about Turrell's illness is cited without date, it is featured in a 1993 article, only two years after Turrell made *Alien Exam*. Charles Hall, "Unkindly Light," *Art Review*, 45 (Dec. 1993-Jan. 1994): 34.

²¹⁹James Turrell, interview with Alison Sarah Jacques in Jacques and Svestka, 59.

²²⁰Hall, 34.

²²¹James Turrell, interview with Alison Sarah Jacques in Jacques and Svestka, 62-63.

The repositioning of the viewer is also an important element in Turrell's later *Gasworks* (1993) (fig. 49). Here the operator slides the viewer's entire body into a round tank until he/she is completely submerged in the circular space. The outside operator, who follows Turrell's previously given instructions as he turns the buttons on the outside control board, is in command of the changing light inside the sphere. The light frequencies and occasional strobes create perceptual sensations of light physically "touching," as if putting pressure on the skin of the viewer's entire body. Viewers' reactions to the experience observed at the artist's show "Into the Light" at the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh (2002-2003) varied from waving to other museum visitors before sliding into the abyss, to returning with a sense of relief or elation, commenting on how it was "quite a trip," wanting to return to the abyss and stay in there longer.²²²

Turrell's series of "Perceptual Cells" are all claustrophobic enclosures alluding to phone booths, prison cells, and monk's cells. As the curators Alison Sara Jacques and Jiri Svestka point out, the word cell also refers to singular biological entities in nature.²²³ As a Minimalist box within the box (the white cube of the gallery or museum space to be discussed in Chapter three), they resemble the

²²²Observed and overheard during author's visit to Mattress Factory, 12 March 2003.

geometry of the space in which they are situated and in a sense create a micro/macro cosmos as in traditional Japanese gardens.

They also allude to prison cells, claustrophobia, and imposed power. Michel Foucault's important discussion of the "Panopticon" refers to Jeremy Bentham's (1748-1832) architectural prison design of the same name, which Foucault sees as emblematic of society's political power system. As a building constructed according to the idea of a simple structure that can control a wider group of people, the Panopticon enables few guards or even a single patroller to watch the group of prisoners from the center of the building.²²⁴ Turrell's series aim to reverse the situation, allowing the viewer to look inside him/herself and experience the light and a sensation of elation. It is therefore, in a sense, Minimalism made political, where the viewer is encouraged to take control over a (self-) imposed situation. Looking to find ways out in a claustrophobic enclosure, the viewer may begin to operate buttons inside. In this way the mind moves beyond the control of any authoritative power.

Turrell's enclosures allude not only to solitary confinement, but also to smaller sanctuaries found on the

²²³Jacques and Svestka, 41.

²²⁴Michel Foucault, "Panopticism" in *Discipline and Punish: the Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (London: Allen Lane, 1977; New York: Vintage Books, 1995), 195-231.

roads or in villages in Catholic, Hindu, and Buddhist countries, as well as smaller temples and places of worship.²²⁵ The stepped platform leading up to the "Perceptual Cell" as in, for example, *Solitary* (1992) (fig. 50) refers to staircases used in many examples of religious structures throughout world history. The ziggurats in Mesopotamia, Djoser's step pyramid in Giza, Egypt, and the pyramids of Central America, were all built on the idea of a staircase leading up to heaven. Buddhist and Hindu temples in India, China and Japan, are similarly often built on top of a hill or mountain so the journey can be viewed as a metaphor of an individual's earthly spiritual path. Steps leading up to the buildings are also integral architectural elements directly preparing you for a divine "uplifted" experience. Turrell explains: "Not for the claustrophobic or the impatient, *Solitary* is both solitary confinement and infinite space."²²⁶ It also evokes places that cannot be entered, like a stupa, built around the idea of an axis mundi, symbolizing a relationship between body, mind, and spirit, and the rest of the universe.²²⁷

Turrell's transformation of the Minimalist cube to include not only an experience of the exterior form but also an encounter with the interior enclosure of the form, while

²²⁵ James Turrell, interview with Alison Sarah Jacques in Jacques and Svestka, 41.

²²⁶Noever, 145.

referencing controlling authoritative systems, embodies his Quaker philosophy of experiencing the inside as a mirror image of the exterior cosmos. Turrell explains: "I feel that spirituality in no way reduces sensuality; the real lushness of spirituality has to do with how sensual it is, and with sharing positive pleasure."²²⁸ The controlled space evoking sensations of anxiety and claustrophobia in Turrell's work is intended to also prompt the viewer to perceptually replace one experience with another, much more positive experience of elation, pleasure, and release. Turrell's sense of spiritual space allowing for the individual experience is key in the series of "Perceptual Cells" as it is in structures built specifically for the purpose of religious worship.

²²⁷James Turrell, interview with Alison Sarah Jacques in Jacques and Svestka, 63.

Chapter 3: Building Spiritual Spaces

It was at the age of 43 that Turrell began to realize how much his Quaker heritage had affected him. While constructing the installation *Meeting* at P.S.1. (fig. 51), it suddenly dawned on him how similar the interior of the installation was to a traditional Quaker Meeting House. Similar to other works in the "Skyspace" series (as discussed in the Introduction), *Meeting* consisted of a white interior with a row of benches mounted to the walls and a large cut in the ceiling open directly towards the sky. The directed artificial light inside the room blended with the exterior light from the "window" in the ceiling. This fusion of the two different light sources created a distinct perceptual experience. The viewer's eyes were intended to slowly flicker back and forth between the inside and the outside environment and, as the light outside began to change, the eyes continued to "zoom" in and out, similar to

²²⁸Ibid., 65.

an aperture or camera lens placed on a slow auto-focus. The austere white interior and its wooden benches facing the center resembled, in miniature, the interior of a traditional Quaker Meeting House.

This chapter will examine the origins of the "Skyspace" series in the context of institutional critique in the 1960s and 1970s.²²⁹ Turrell's decision to detach himself from the governing art market and institutions will be viewed as parallel to the anti-institutional direction in Quaker philosophy, one of its most fundamental principles. Interestingly, Turrell's projects designed specifically for the purpose of worship all include a "Skyspace." They will here be considered as a possible reassessment and critique of the "white cube", further altering it into a contemporary sanctuary or refuge with the aim of fostering individual experiences of a transformative nature.

The Mendota Stoppages (1969-1974)

It was during the years immediately following the A&T project (discussed in the previous chapter), that Turrell in

²²⁹Institutional critique developed as a direction within Conceptual Art in the late 1960s. Artists (Michael Asher, Daniel Buren and others) critiqued the purpose of art making and the art institution as a physical space for its presentation. They proposed that institutions be seen as a network of interactions between different power structures and discourses (criticism, journalism, corporations, etcetera). See Alexander Alberro, *Conceptual Art and the Politics of Publicity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003); Daniel Buren, "Function of the Museum," *Artforum* xiii/1 (1973): 68; and Ed Wallis, ed. *Hans Haacke: Unfinished*

1969 developed the very first model for a "Skyspace" in his studio at the Mendota Hotel, Ocean Park, California.

Although it remained a model, Turrell experimented with several structural cuts in the building. Like most emerging installation artists without a gallery, Turrell developed and showed his installations in his studio space. These site-specific experiments eventually prompted his landlord

to evict him out of a concern for the maintenance of the building.²³⁰ Although *The Mendota Stoppages* didn't include

any structural cuts per se, its emphasis on an experience unifying the interior and the exterior deserves to be

discussed here as important for the simultaneously

developing "Skyspace" series. The time-based

happening/performance piece entitled *The Mendota Stoppages*

(1969-1974) (fig. 52) consisted of sequences of light

experiences where the viewer followed Turrell in an extended journey throughout his studio. Sealing off all doors and

windows in the studio and painting the ceiling, walls, and

floor in a bright white, allowed Turrell to achieve full

control over the interior and to direct the at times random

exterior light. He released this light back into the space

through small cut-out apertures in the blocked out windows

and doors.

Business, exh.cat. (New York: New Museum of Contemporary Art; Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1986).

²³⁰Adcock, 115.

Since the installation no longer exists, it is only possible to experience it indirectly through artists' and critics' recollections and photographic documentation of the work. Adcock, for example, describes *The Mendota Stoppages* as sequences in which the viewers were invited to enter into the front space of the studio, seated at first near the south wall. After Turrell dimmed the interior light, the viewers found themselves engulfed in darkness adjusting their eyes, until Turrell gradually began to open the shades of the south window, allowing a little bit of light to slip back in through a built-in slit in front of the window shades. A movement of colored changing light appeared on the north wall as the light from the cars passing outside began to glint over the surface, generating a flickering image of blurry lines playing over the wall. After approximately ten minutes, Turrell would open the shades to a higher position, allowing the taller streetlights to blend in with the changing forms. The colors, now much more subdued, reflected on the surface of the white walls as they moved in a continuously blurred vision, according to Adcock, sparking associations with an experimental movie projected onto the wall.²³¹

Opening the door into a second room, Turrell guided the viewers into a larger rectangular space in which they were seated on Japanese straw mats. Watching bands of light from

²³¹Ibid., 91.

the outside north and southbound traffic as it gently changed positions on the interior walls, viewers occasionally also experienced an eastbound vehicle whose headlights would flush the northeast wall as it passed by the building. The length of the viewing process varied as it was based on Turrell's intuitive sense of the viewers' needs to stay longer in one place or move forward into the next.²³² Operating curtains, shutters, and a sliding door, Turrell guided the viewer through the experiences dividing them into "stoppages" in a piece that included random elements of both happening and performance.

The title's strong association with Marcel Duchamp's Dada experiment *3 Stoppages Étalon (3 Standard Stoppages)* (1913-1914) (fig. 53) has surprisingly remained undeveloped in the literature.²³³ Duchamp's piece, produced as a chance operated "drawing," consists of three pieces of white string dropped onto a piece of canvas. Attached with glue, the three pieces of canvas were then mounted on separate sheets of glass and used as models for new and "solid" forms cut into wood. Models and forms presented in a wooden box as one final piece represented the chance-operated process of its making.

²³²Ibid.

²³³Turrell has referred to the retrospective exhibition of Marcel Duchamp's work organized by Walter Hopps at Pasadena Art Museum in 1963 as important to his thinking and the catalog indicates *3 Stoppages Étalon (3 Standard Stoppages)* was indeed included in the show.

Turrell's *Mendota Stoppages* applied the randomness of the outside environment and its light, developing three-dimensional "drawings" of light onto the walls in the darkened studio space. Turrell's sequences of random light experiences also corresponded to the composer John Cage's chance operated performances (as discussed in Chapter 2). Turrell's drawing *Music for Mendota* (1970-71) (fig. 53) guides us through each of the stoppages, materializing the process of the moment of the making, much like Duchamp in *3 Stoppages Étalon* (*3 Standard Stoppages*). Whereas both Cage and Duchamp questioned the established conventions of what art should be, Turrell similarly tested the viewers' experiences of a given and orchestrated series of phenomena, now using his studio as the field and framework for the viewer's encounter with the light.

The Studio as an Alternative Space

Following a long tradition of artists using their studios as display spaces for their work, Turrell's performance piece resembled in many ways the Romanian sculptor Constantin Brancusi's theatrical appearances in his studio during patrons' visits.²³⁴ Brancusi orchestrated

²³⁴Auguste Rodin, Constantin Brancusi, Pablo Picasso were some of the key figures in early modern art who utilized the studio as an allegory and showcase for their work. For references see Ronnie L. Zakon, *The Artist and the Studio in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1978); Anna Chave, *Constantin Brancusi, Shifting the Bases of Art* (New

these visits so that the light would hit the *Bird in Space* (1923) when he unveiled it.²³⁵ Turrell's use of the studio as a gallery space in *The Mendota Stoppages* is in some ways similar.

Inviting friends, colleagues, patrons, and other interested persons for special viewings in his studio, Turrell worked as the artist, educator, director, gallery manager, and receptionist at the same time as he presented his work. Parts of his curriculum vitae refer to solo shows at the Main and Hill Gallery (1969 - 1974), in fact the address of his Mendota studio, which he has also described as his "own alternative space" at the time.²³⁶

Initiated in 1969, the "Skyspaces" may profitably be seen in relation to the concurrent debates over institutional critique in terms of shunning the museums and commercial galleries. In New York City alone, four new art organizations emerged during 1969: The Art Workers Coalition (AWC), The Black Emergency Cultural Coalition, The Guerilla Art Action Group (GAAG), and The Women Artists in Revolution (W.A.R.). West coast artists also organized. The Arts

Haven: Yale University, 1993); and Michael FitzGerald, *Picasso: the Artist's Studio*, exh. cat. (Hartford: Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art; New Haven, Yale University Press, 2001). Later examples include Claes Oldenburg's *Store* (1962). See Claes Oldenburg, *Claes Oldenburg: The Multiples Store* (London: The Hayward Art Gallery, The South Bank Centre, 1996); Liza Kirwin and Joan Lord, *Artists in Their Studios: Images from the Smithsonian's Archives of American Art* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2007); and Pedro E. Guerrero, *A Photographer's Journey* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton Architectural Press, 2007).

Foundation, for example, founded in Los Angeles in 1966, included Sam Francis, Edward Moses, Larry Bell, Ed Ruscha, and others. The focus there was to establish an alternative forum for artists to meet, discuss issues, and form ties with one another and the art world around them.²³⁷

Perhaps the most active of these groups, The Art Workers Coalition (AWC), demanded inclusion of artists on museum boards; a better representation of women, African-American, and Puerto Rican artists in museum collections; community outreach to include all areas of the local population; free museum admission; and scheduling of exhibitions to include solo shows by contemporary artists.²³⁸ The Coalition underscored political ties between MoMA board members or trustees and the government, and publicly exposed the names of those who officially supported the Vietnam War. Ties between the opposition to the hierarchy of the art world and the resistance to the Vietnam War were strong, often leading to a unified fight as in, for example, The Art Strike Against Racism, War, and Oppression, that called for

²³⁵Chave, *Constantin Brancusi, Shifting the Bases of Art*, 280.

²³⁶Adcock, 88.

²³⁷Robert T. Buck, ed., *Sam Francis, Paintings 1947-1972*, exh. cat. (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, New York, 1972), essays by Franz Meyer, Wieland Schmied, Robert T. Buck, Jr., 138.

²³⁸AWC Demands, 1969, rpt. Lucy Lippard, "The Art Workers' Coalition: not a history," *Studio International* (November 1970): 171-2.

a one-day closing of all museums in New York City in protest of the Vietnam War.²³⁹

The critic Lucy Lippard, a former library employee at MoMA and one of the active members of the AWC who wrote numerous pamphlets and flyers for the organization, recalled the blend of political activism spanning from the Vietnam War protests to institutional critique:

Museums were the enemies, because they wouldn't speak out against the war. The trustees were in the military-industrial complex. We went for the Met really more than the Modern. But we went for the Modern a lot, because they were our museum. We perceived them as our museum. They didn't perceive themselves as our museum at all.²⁴⁰

Several artists and critics involved with the AWC felt a certain kinship with the museum, having worked for MoMA in different capacities, although they were highly critical of the museum's governance and leadership role in the art world.²⁴¹

At a public hearing at the School of Visual Arts organized by the AWC in 1969, speakers included Mark di Suvero, Dan Graham, Hans Haacke, Joseph Kosuth, and Barnett Newman. Attacking the established and politicized museum

²³⁹Julie H. Reiss, *From Margin to Center, The Spaces of Installation* (Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: MIT Press, 2001), 79.

²⁴⁰Lucy Lippard quit her job in the MoMA library in 1960. Oral History Project; interview with Lucy Lippard, 1999, p. 27. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

²⁴¹Among the former employees were also Dan Flavin, Sol LeWitt, Robert Ryman, and others. Oral History Project; interview with Lucy Lippard, 1999, p. 21. The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

world, the Minimalist artist Carl Andre took perhaps the most radical position calling for a complete resignation from the art world:

1. The solution to the artist's problems is not getting rid of the turnstiles at the Museum of Modern Art, but in getting rid of the art world. This the artists can easily do by trusting one-another and forming a true community of artists.
2. No more "shows" and "exhibitions." Let artists show their work to their friends and let artists see the work of their friends. But no more public exhibitions.²⁴²

Andre's alternative "art world" was one of autonomous artists' communities where collectors and patrons would be guided directly to younger artists' studios by their older and "better-selling" artist friends.²⁴³ Utopian as it may seem today, the idea of change through smaller communities as alternatives to the established art world/government, was not uncommon in the 1960s. In fact, alternative, progressive, and often socialist agendas played a significant role in the grass-roots philosophy of the 1968-generation, as it did in the AWC. The Mendota Studio used by Turrell as a gallery space may be seen in this context, in that it allowed Turrell complete control over the work, and its exposure to a select audience.

Turrell's early encounter with the commercial art world had indeed been a mixed experience. Following an

²⁴²Carl Andre, *Open Hearing*, Art Workers Coalition, April 10, 1969, 30, J.B.H. III, 1.10, MoMA Archives, New York.

²⁴³Ibid, 33.

introduction by Jasper Johns to the New York dealer Leo Castelli in 1968, a prospective exhibition in Castelli's 77th Street gallery in New York seemed at first an exhilarating idea to the twenty-five-year-old artist. Turrell, however, soon realized that the physical size of the Castelli gallery was too small for the series of "Projection" pieces he planned for the exhibition. Instead, Castelli introduced Turrell to the director of Pace Gallery, Arnold Glimcher, and an arrangement between the two led to a paid advance for Turrell, enabling him to make ten new works for a new show.

Sources describing the following course of events between the gallery and the artist differ slightly. Adcock's monograph refers to the director's visit to Turrell's studio in 1968 turning into the offer of a show the following year, and a second visit in 1969, when Glimcher saw *The Mendota Stoppages* and began questioning their saleability. According to Adcock, Turrell decided to return the advance, and the two parties separated, an event Turrell, in an interview with Adcock, explained as follows:

Well the gallery people took one look at the work and said, "we don't know how to sell this." Now at the time Pace was doing well selling Bob Irwin's paintings and Larry Bell's pieces, and they had sort of taken me on because of Larry and Bob. The projector pieces they thought they could sell, but the new things, no. So suddenly the gallery that had given me the impetus to go on and work ahead was saying, in effect, "We don't want your next show, we want your last one. In fact we won't take your new work." I was old enough to

know what that meant and young enough to say
"Screw it, I'm not doing that."²⁴⁴

A more recent article by Calvin Tomkins, suggests a slightly different scenario. According to Tomkins, Glimcher's offer was turned down by Turrell who decided he preferred to continue to develop his works in the studio, instead of having them in a gallery.²⁴⁵ In any event, it was following Turrell's presentation of new works, and the gallery's questioning of its saleability, that Turrell decided to opt out of the commercial gallery world for a while and instead work as a self-sufficient artist in his own "gallery," or alternative space.²⁴⁶

Turrell, like Andre and others, was skeptical of the larger art institutions and the mechanisms of the art market.²⁴⁷ The same year that he parted with the commercial art scene (1969), he rejected an invitation to participate in one of the first installation shows at The Museum of Modern Art in New York. The exhibition *Spaces* (December 30, 1969 - March 1, 1970), organized by associate curator Jennifer Licht, was an attempt to meet the criticism and

²⁴⁴Adcock, 87.

²⁴⁵Tomkins, 68.

²⁴⁶It was not until 1977, ten years later, that Turrell showed drawings at the Heiner Friedrich Gallery in Cologne. In 1980, Turrell had a solo show at the Leo Castelli Gallery in New York, and has since worked with commercial galleries in the U.S and internationally.

²⁴⁷Carl Andre, however, continued to exhibit in commercial galleries. Rita Satorius, ed., *Carl Andre*, exh. cat. (Den Haag: Haags Gemeentemuseum; Eindhoven: Stedelijk Van Abbemuseum, 1987), 168-173.

growing pressure from the AWC that the museum mount more shows of contemporary art.²⁴⁸ Turrell, Michael Asher, Larry Bell, Dan Flavin, Robert Morris, Franz Erhard Walther, and Pulsa (a collective whose members were Michael Cain, Patrick Clancy, William Crosby, William Duesing, Paul Fuge, Peter Kindlmann, and David Rumsey) were all selected for the show. Coinciding with the moon landing that same year, the show was given the title *Spaces* and launched with an accompanying catalog featuring stars and planets on the cover. All works were to be site-specific, and the artists were promised full responsibility for and control over their installations.²⁴⁹

In a letter to Turrell inviting him to participate in the show, Licht guaranteed that: "each [artist] will control his own room, and the only unifying concept will be the employment of a cohesive spatial situation in a single work."²⁵⁰ Visiting Turrell in his studio in 1969, Licht was impressed by his installations. When Turrell declined the offer, Licht's following "informal progress report" to the Acting Director Walter Bareiss, shows not only Turrell's disinterest in becoming part of a "system," but also her disappointment, as she explained:

On the trip to California I also approached an artist called Jim Turrell, whose work has never been seen here; indeed, has hardly been seen on

²⁴⁸Reiss, 79.

²⁴⁹Ibid., 88.

²⁵⁰Jennifer Licht to James Turrell, 27 August 1969, Museum of Modern Art, exhibition files of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, New York.

the West Coast. He consented, after much time and negotiation, to show me some pieces and I was enormously impressed. Subsequently Turrell announced that he does not want to allow his work to be involved in the "system", meaning, I believe, the marketing and promotional system and therefore he will never sell a piece or participate in any exhibition. This was quite a setback as he would have been very important to the show.²⁵¹

Exhibition files indicate that no other artist declined the curator's invitation. Although Flavin was an active member of the AWC, he decided to participate in the MoMA show, and Larry Bell, reportedly, was very enthusiastic and, according to Licht, waiting for "a huge machine" to arrive that would allow him to make a large-scale installation for the show.²⁵²

A *Newsweek* article from 1969 similarly reveals Turrell's skepticism about the art world. Critic Douglas Davis's portrayal of the artist is strikingly similar to Licht's:

The 26-year-old Turrell resists all attempts to pigeonhole him in any way. He resists even the term "artist," together with the binding ties that the term inspires. He had his first-and only-formal exhibition of sculptures employing light and movement at the Pasadena Art Museum in 1967. Since then he has been courted by museums and galleries, both of which he avoids. "The only coherent statement I got from him," says one gallery official, "was that he didn't want people to see his work in a context where they could be considered eligible for possession."²⁵³

²⁵¹Jennifer Licht to Walter Bareiss, 23 September 1969, Museum of Modern Art, exhibition files of the Department of Painting and Sculpture, New York.

²⁵²Ibid.

Turrell's early involvement with the art scene was thus limited by choice to the artist's own studio and a growing circle of artist friends. He has since changed his position to also work with commercial galleries, as for example the Pace Wildenstein Gallery in New York. Although now much better positioned to negotiate criteria for exhibitions, sales, etcetera, Turrell continues to advise younger artists to look into non-profit organizations as possible exhibition venues for their work. Non-profit organizations, such as Cape Street Project (San Francisco), Mattress Factory (Pittsburgh), and others, he claims, allowed him do the work he was interested in during the early stages of his career.²⁵⁴

Turrell's avoiding showing his work in an institutional context (exempt for Pasadena), even declining an offer from an institution as important as MoMA early in his career, can be seen as a "sign of the times" when many artists approached the art world idealistically from a political and somewhat utopian perspective. The fact that Turrell later complied and now works with the commercial art scene and established museums, might be seen as a symptom of the artist caving in to the system, using it for the betterment of his career. But it could also be seen as part of a more

²⁵³Douglas Davis, "View from Hill and Main," *Newsweek* 74, No. 17, (27 October 1969): 111.

personal re-evaluation, similar to Turrell's previous recognition of his own self-righteousness in his questioning of authority during the Vietnam War. Turrell, however, still tries to protect the autonomy of his work, controlling its outlets by establishing direct contact with patrons, often developing long-term relationships with them.

Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo and the *Chapel of Light*

It was a visit to Turrell's studio that in 1972 sparked a long-term friendship between the artist and an enthusiastic patron, the Italian collector Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo. Excited by the work he saw, Panza soon commissioned Turrell to create a series of new works for his mansion, Villa Varese, near Milan, Italy.

It was for Panza that Turrell first began developing plans for several "Skyspaces," one of which was entitled *Chapel of Light* (1977) (Fig. 54). Designed as a built structure in the form of a Latin cross, the *Chapel of Light* was conceived as one of the first models for a "Skyspace." It was also the very first structure designed by Turrell with the purpose of spiritual worship in mind. Though never realized, the chapel was designed to include a rectangular "Skyspace" in each of the four arms of the cross, as well as an oculus in the center of the cupola, similar to the

²⁵⁴James Turrell, "Plato's Cave and the Light Within" (lecture at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 12 March

Pantheon. The changing exterior light was intended to blend with the interior light, allowing the viewer to select a specific place and observe the dramatic changes of color as the light outside changed, especially around dawn or dusk. The visitor could also move from one place to another or additionally walk up an outside platform allowing for an exterior viewing of the different "chambers." When seen from above, these would generate Ganzfeld sensations of spaces filled with light.²⁵⁵

The allusions to the tradition of Italian church building and the structure of a Latin cross dating back to early Christianity could be seen as an acknowledgement of his new patron's Italian Catholic background. Some of Turrell's later architectural projects--The Meditation House (2000), Japan, for example--similarly follow the local and traditional (in that case Japanese) building styles in both proportion and use of materials and so exemplify his Quaker openness to other cultures and religious traditions. *The Chapel of Light* was intended to be a small and domestic chapel, following the Italian Catholic tradition of home chapels, an example of which is the chapel dedicated to the saints Tosca and Teutoria in Verona, Italy (late fifteenth-early sixteenth century) (fig. 55). Similar to the chapel in Verona, *The Chapel of Light* made use of the cruciform plan,

2003).

though it aimed to connect the viewer with the sky by bringing the experience down to a human scale.

Turrell's "Skyspaces" and the White Cube

Around the same time that Turrell was developing the "Skyspace" series for Panza in Italy, the artist and writer Brian O'Doherty (a.k.a. Patrick Ireland) published a series of articles in *ArtForum*, soon reworked into a book entitled *Inside the White Cube* (1976). In print only one year prior to Turrell's design for the *Chapel of Light*, O'Doherty described the modern gallery and museum space as an institutional space constructed "along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church."²⁵⁶ He defined the space as an austere, almost clinical setting:

The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you can click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have

²⁵⁵Noever, 196. (Ganzfeld is defined and discussed in depth in chap. 2).

²⁵⁶Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube - The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1976), 15, first published in *Artforum*, 1976, following a lecture "Inside the White Cube, 1855-1974," organized by curator Maurice Tuchman at Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1975. See Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes of the Gallery Space, Part I," *Artforum* 14, No. 7 (March 1976): 24-30; Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube Part II: The Eye and the Spectator," *Artforum* 14, No. 8 (April 1976): 26-33; and Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube Part III: Context as Content," *Artforum* 15, No. 3 (November 1976): 38-44.

at the wall. The art is free, as the saying used to go, "to take on its own life."²⁵⁷

Contrary to serving the purpose of bringing the work alive, O'Doherty claimed the "White Cube" instead:

subtracts from the artwork all cues that interfere with the fact that it is "art." The work is isolated from everything that would detract from its own evaluation of itself. This gives the space a presence possessed by other spaces where conventions are preserved through the repetition of a closed system of values. Some of the sanctity of the church, the formality of the courtroom, the mystique of the experimental laboratory joins with chic design to produce a unique chamber of aesthetics.²⁵⁸

The *Mendota Stoppages*, the proposed plan for *The Chapel of Light*, and the later *Meeting*, embraced the sanctuary of the "White Cube," but by turning it into a counter-orthodox or alternative space where the institutional framework was diminished or dematerialized simply by the use of light. Prompting individual experiences of simultaneously looking at the inside and the outside of "the white box," the work was now directly located in the artist's studio, projected to be in a patron's home, or an old school building adapted for exhibition purposes. The goal for reworking "the white cube" in Turrell's pieces was simply for the individual to experience the light while opening the experience to include the outside world or, as Turrell decided to put it simply:

²⁵⁷O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube - The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, 15.

²⁵⁸Ibid., 14.

"to bring the cosmos closer."²⁵⁹ This anti-authoritarian aspect of Turrell's work can also be related to the similarly experiential and anti-authoritarian aspect of the Quaker Meeting and Quaker practice in general.

Meeting, P.S.1.

A white nearly cubical space with handcrafted benches mounted to each of the four walls formed a visual setting for a visitor's personal experience of the light. The installation *Meeting* (1986) (fig. 56) became a turning point in Turrell's explorations of light as an allegory of the human soul. Breaking through the ceiling on the third floor of an existing building, Turrell had again created an experiential dialog between inward and outward boundaries, exterior and interior realms, linking the contemporary human being inside the building to the outside world. He had also intuitively followed Fox's suggestion of converting an existing building into an experiential "Meeting" setting.

The fact that many Quaker Meeting Houses traditionally are used for multiple purposes, which often include school activities, must have struck Turrell in a profound way when he realized he had intuitively incorporated very personal layers of his past. In fact, in order to experience the

²⁵⁹James Turrell, "Plato's Cave and the Light Within" (lecture at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 12 March 2003).

work, one first has to walk down the hallway of the previous school building, left near its original state with classroom doors and color intact. Opening one of the doors, the viewer steps right into the "Skyspace," resembling a Meeting room. The fact that his parents were both teachers, and his mother and grandmother both Quakers, must have resonated in the artist and made the work a very personal piece. It was also a piece that more universally sought to create a perceptual experience of awakening, similar to a spiritual "opening" during Quaker Meeting.

George Fox's first spiritual "Openings" to the "Inward Light" had initiated gatherings in silent "Meetings" in the 1650s, and prompted Fox to believe that God exists in all living beings and suggest that believers silence their minds and listen to the source within, and Turrell's *Meeting* does exactly that. The "Skyspace" similarly gathers a group of individuals (here museum and gallery visitors) who, seated on benches in an austere white gallery setting, may experience exterior and interior light from different light sources blending together. Directing the viewer's gaze towards the sky, Turrell not only generates a physical experience of seeing, but also directs the focus onto the ultimate blue, the infinite, or cosmos. He brings the interior and exterior realm together into a metaphorical allegorical experience of the human versus the infinite, or as he later would phrase it in an interview on Quakerism:

"the allegory of how soul inhabits body but has a life outside it."²⁶⁰

Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas

Live Oak Meeting House in Houston, Texas, was the first structure built and realized consciously following Turrell's Quaker beliefs. It was also a moment of recognition that led to its commission in 1995 (fig. 57 & 58). This time it was the dealer Hiram Butler, a co-owner of the Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery in Houston who, prompted by the P.S.1. *Meeting*, experienced a eureka moment. He would visit *Meeting*, one of his favorite installations, every time he was in New York, and one day, as he drove up north, he passed by the Hancock Shaker Village and decided to stop his car and take a tour. In the village Meeting House, he saw a strong resemblance to Turrell's installation, called him up and asked him if he was possibly a Shaker. Turrell informed Butler that he was not a Shaker, but a Quaker. This was the reason he had decided to entitle the P.S.1. installation *Meeting*.²⁶¹

As one of the artist's dealers, Butler was intrigued and looked to familiarize himself with Quakerism and Turrell provided him with contact information to the Society of Friends in Houston. Butler began to attend and participate

²⁶⁰James Turrell, interview by Robert Baldridge.

in Meetings and became gradually involved with the society's business meetings, where he learned about plans for a permanent building. Not finding the existing funds sufficient for a new structure, Butler made another phone call to Turrell, this time asking him if he would be interested in designing a Meeting House for the Houston community. With the artist involved, Butler believed he could raise funds from the local art patrons and help the Quakers build a new place for their gatherings. Turrell immediately agreed and the process began to take form.²⁶²

Established as a Society of Friends in the 1950s, the community had first met in private homes, then in different locations, including during the 1970s one of the de Menil family's properties near the Rothko Chapel.²⁶³ The Rothko Chapel (1971) was well-known to many of the Houston Quakers, some of whom had used it as a place for Meetings of Marriage and other personal events.²⁶⁴ With Turrell's guarantee of a free design for the building and the Society's limited budget, Butler managed to match the remaining money for the 1.2 million dollar project. One of the first donors was Mrs.

²⁶¹Hiram Butler, conversation with author, 5 August 2005, Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas.

²⁶²Ibid.

²⁶³May Mansoor Munn, "A Place We Friends Can Call Home," Live Oak Meeting Homepage, <http://www.friendshouston.org/lofmhist.html>, accessed 31 July 2005. Malcolm McCorquedale II, Executive Director of the Menil Foundation and a member of the Friends' Society organized the meetings, which were held in one of the Menil Foundation's buildings. Malcolm McCorquedale III, son of

Dominique de Menil (1908-1998). The second was Jane Blaffer Owen and the remaining two have chosen to remain anonymous.²⁶⁵

Although the Friends' Society in Houston had long wished for a new and more permanent home for their Meetings, the idea for a new project designed by an artist, with assistance from the local architect Leslie K. Elkins, prompted questions and concerns among some members of the society. "We're building a steeple house," said Friend Susan Long in an interview with the *New York Times*, "and a steeple house - that's about the worst thing a Quaker can do."²⁶⁶ This objection derived directly from Fox's writings in his seventeenth-century *Journals*.

One of Fox's early spiritual leadings had indeed guided him to see the church as a gathering of people, rather than an elaborate architectural structure. In his *Journal* (1692) he wrote very specifically how:

It was opened to me that God, who made the world, did not dwell in temples made with hands. This, at the first, seemed a strange word because both priests and people used to call their temples or churches, dreadful places, and holy ground, and the temples of God. But the Lord showed me, so that I did see clearly that he did not dwell in these temples which men had commanded and set up,

Malcolm McCorquedale II, conversation with author, 7 August 2005, Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas.

²⁶⁴Munn.

²⁶⁵Hiram Butler, conversation with author, 5 August 2005. Dominique de Menil and Jane Blaffer Owen are two of the most important art patrons in Houston.

²⁶⁶Susan Long quoted in William L. Hamilton, "Quaker Simple, Simply Beautiful," *New York Times*, 11 January 2001, F10.

but in people's hearts; for both Stephen and the Apostle Paul bore testimony that he did not dwell in temples made with hands, not even in that which he had once commanded to be built, since he put an end to it; but that his people were his temple, and he dwelt in them...²⁶⁷

As an alternative to worship in elaborate church buildings, Fox advocated Meetings to take place in nature, or in already existing buildings. He suggested:

And as concerning the meetingplace itself whether the Barn or the House, I shall leave it to you. But if the Barn will do better, if you could make it wider ... and the ground may be rais'ed that you may go up a step or to go into the Meeting House & it will be more wholesome... you have stones enough, and poor men to dig them. And I would have all the Thatch pulled off all the Houses...Let all the Houses be slated, and the Walls about it be made substantial to stand, and laid in Lime and Sand....I would have a porch made to the Meeting place of common side of the yard ... And I would have the meeting place large, for truth may increase.²⁶⁸

It was not surprising that some members of the Live Oak Quaker community were concerned about the appropriateness of a new building, one that even included an artwork, an additional problem for a community that historically had resented any visual representation of Godliness inside their local Meeting House.

²⁶⁷Nickalls, 8.

²⁶⁸George Fox letter to Thomas Lower, 28 Day 2 Mo 1687; "True Copy of a Letter from George Fox to Thomas Lower: Touching his intention how to dispose of Petty House and Tenement as Followeth," Tuke Papers, Borthwick Institute, York (catalog no. 8); "A Letter from George Fox, Hitherto Unpublished, On Building a Meeting House," *Friends Quarterly* 20, 2 (April 1977): 68-69, rpt. in Lavoie, "Eighteenth-Century Development of the Meeting House," Lapsansky and Verplanck, 158-9.

It was not until Turrell began to visit and attend the Meetings, that the more skeptical members of the Houston Quaker community slowly began to trust the idea. Donna Dzierlanga, another member of the Friends Society, recalls how it was Turrell's personal investment, and experience of his participation as a "leading", that enabled them to understand and accept the artist's involvement and goals.²⁶⁹ Turrell's Quaker background and the community considering him "a long time practicing Quaker" turned the tides and the community decided he, if anybody, would be the best possible person to design a building according to their Quaker beliefs. Dzierlanga explained how "we came to share Jim's leading, as a way of giving something to the entire Houston community that was important."²⁷⁰ In the aftermath, May Mansoor Munn added: "while we had genuine concerns, the Meeting became clear that we would accept Turrell's installation with the hope that, like the Rothko Chapel, the project would serve as both link and ministry to the wider, non-Quaker community."²⁷¹

Since January 2001, Live Oak Meeting House has in fact been open for both visitors and for worship. The "Skyspace" centered in the building is open every Friday night for

²⁶⁹The Friends Society makes decisions by consensus. The agreement of the building a new Meeting House was also made without voting. The fact that Turrell was a practicing Quaker was important to many of the members of the community. Bette Drexler quoted in Hamilton, F10.

²⁷⁰Ibid.

visitors and may be opened when need be for different occasions and services. The building is laid out in a rectangular form with the official entrance situated in the west end, although the building can (and often is) entered from the side doors or the back (fig. 59). Situated on a quiet residential side road in a low-income suburb of Houston, the Meeting House blends in with the homes on the street with its unified colors and classical materials in a simple and modest, yet sophisticated way. The silence and tranquility of the side road area stands in contrast, however, with the nearby neighborhood of car dealers, whose vans and SUVs are presented with rows of plastic streamers to attract the attention of buyers interested in purchasing new and used cars. Billboards announce special offerings from malls. There are also second-hand clothing stores, many churches²⁷² and an amalgam of richer and poorer family houses.

²⁷¹Munn.

²⁷²The largest church denomination in Houston is the Baptist Church, accounting for 831 churches in the Houston area. The second largest group is the Methodist Church with 158 churches, followed by The Church of Christ (a neoconservative Protestant denomination, believing in a restoration of the New Testament Christianity, formed in the early nineteenth century and very strong in the west, south, and midwest) and The Church of God (a neoconservative direction formed in the South in the late 19th century, believing that a second rain of gifts of the Holy Spirit will occur similar to that of the first Christian Pentecost). Both have 127 churches under their denomination in Houston. In a radius of 3 miles around Live Oak Meeting House, I have counted 15 Baptist churches, 1 Church of God, 1 Presbyterian, and 2 Buddhist Centers.

Positioned slightly off the street curb, the building faces trees, bushes, and grass, on the one side and on the other a quiet road with residential houses and trees and the lush green lawn leading up to the Meeting House. Its elongated façade refers visually to the long and low airport hangars near Houston's Bush International Airport, but also to the gray buildings of The Menil Collection, similarly painted in a light color with windows evenly placed along the façade (see fig. 60 & 61). The exterior of Live Oak Meeting House is painted in a subdued light blue that corresponds to the color of the sky during most of the day. It is entered by a beautiful light gray cement path flanked with black gravel on both sides. The building's modest appearance in its immediate surroundings corresponds to locations of historical Quaker Meeting Houses hidden or highly integrated into areas of family houses.²⁷³ The color range from the intense green grass to the black gravel and the grey paths leading you up to the light blue house, creates a tranquility that is simple and austere, in many ways similar to a Japanese gravel garden (fig. 62).

The interior consists of three separate spaces. Entering from the west, the visitor sees an elongated entrance hall including four armchairs and tables for pamphlets and information. A wall of wooden panels resembles

²⁷³Kenneth Lindley, *Chapels and Meeting Houses* (London: John Baker Publishers Limited, 1969), 59-60.

the partition panels in historical Meeting Houses, used then to divide men and women into separate congregations, with the possibility of reuniting them again in common business meetings. The panels here serve as a partition between the entrance hall and the Meeting room, now designed as a set of "double doors/walls" allowing for storage space between the partition and the Meeting room.

Walking through the center doors of the partition, the visitor enters into a large square meeting space that includes handmade oak benches with dark blue cushions. Window niches have additionally been turned into seating areas, again covered with the dark-blue cushions. A "Skyspace" in the middle of the room can be opened at dawn and at dusk, or held closed during rain, with light emanating from a blend of blue and red fluorescent lights hidden between the ceiling and the roof. The walls are painted white with a brushed surface, similar to the grayish, brushed surface used inside the Rothko Chapel.

The third section behind the back wall of the Meeting room lies behind partition doors and includes a large table and several chairs designed by Turrell for coffee gatherings and committee meetings. On both sides of the "kitchen," separate men's and women's bathrooms follow the same color scheme and materials as the rest of the Meeting House. The details of all the rooms, furniture, materials, colors, and overall composition are simple and understated. The high

quality of the materials and overall craftsmanship is evident throughout.

The experience of the Meeting House varies greatly depending on the time of day. Entering the Meeting space, the visitor experiences and sees austere white walls broken up by the warm colors of the wooden benches and the open vistas to the green and lush landscape outside the vertical row of windows. Light entering from the sides blends with the interior light placed horizontally on the upper part of the walls facing the vaulted ceiling.²⁷⁴ The "Skyspace" can be activated mechanically by a volunteer who pushes a button in the back of the building for two motors on top of the roof to start rolling the roof aside, opening the ceiling onto a rectangle of the Texas blue sky. No trees, no horizon, no fixed points are visible through the "Skyspace", only the blue sky and the blend of light sources. This begins to activate the eyes' foci and results in a highly intensified experience of the exterior - interior relationship.

A viewing of the "Skyspace" at dusk affords an intensified experience of the natural world with the sounds from birds, chickadees, and other animals providing a "concert" outside the building. Halfway through the hour long viewing, the sounds abruptly vanish. The sudden quiet

²⁷⁴Live Oak is in fact the first "Skyspace" installation that includes side windows.

only intensifies the impression of the sky, which has now turned from light to dark blue, and echoes the color of the cushions inside. Slowly turning darker, the color appears material, reminiscent of an Yves Klein blue. The experience gradually comes to an end with a black rectangular opening framed by a white ceiling.

As a subdued and subtle experience, the Live Oak Meeting House interior and its "Skyspace" resemble the experiments in Turrell's *Mendota Stoppages* in the orchestrated yet random scenario of the changing appearances of sounds formed by outside circumstances. Live Oak Meeting House, however, is an experience of an abstracted yet natural encounter in which the environment is brought closer to us.

The fact that some of the trees had to be cut down for the "Skyspace" to provide this perceptual experience, and for the Meeting House to be built, raised questions that troubled some of the Quakers. Bette Drexler, for example, couldn't help but wonder why the building couldn't just as well have been situated on the part of the land where there had been fewer trees to cut down.²⁷⁵ Although the cutting down of eighteen trees may seem like a dramatic and perhaps unnecessary move, the placement of the building on another part of the ground would have given it an entirely different appearance. The adjacent property houses an industrial

building, much less interesting than the natural land and the quiet road the building faces today. The Quakers are now gradually organizing the surroundings following their own ideas and the community's needs and wishes. They have planted trees, organized a butterfly garden, and an area for herbs, and placed a few boulders underneath one of the trees for seating.

In preparation for the design of Live Oak Meeting House, Turrell studied examples of older and traditional Quaker Meeting Houses. One of the oldest existing American structures still in use, The Third Haven Friends Meeting House in Easton, Maryland (1682-1684) (fig. 63) became one of the more significant sources for his design.

Live Oak Meeting House follows the design of the Third Haven Quaker Meeting in its low profile with a row of five windows and three doors arranged along the longer sides of the rectangular building, as well as its symmetrically designed façade with two windows flanking the entrance door. The white oak benches are also based on the design of the benches at Third Haven (fig. 64).²⁷⁵ The use of natural wood framing the windows and doors similarly echoes the interior of Third Haven, bringing the Quaker emphasis on rustic and natural materials into the design and, in a more physical way, again linking the outdoor landscape with the Meeting

²⁷⁵Drexler quoted in Hamilton, F1.

²⁷⁶Hamilton, F1.

space. Though the gable structure in Third Haven indicates the initial building might have been constructed in the form of a T, the existing rectangular plan follows a vernacular colonial style for a residential house without extensive ornamentation.²⁷⁷ Doors and windows along the two sides of the building provide a rhythmical series of openings to the outside, similar to Turrell's design (now also including doors). The porch over the door to Third Haven has been replaced by an extension of the roof at Live Oak, often seen in contemporary Texas ranch houses (fig. 65), where low walls and a gable extended over the façade provide shelter from wind and rain.

The Third Haven Friends Meeting House is not only one of the earliest examples of Quaker architecture in the United States, but also a building of historical significance as a Meeting for many important Quaker personalities. George Fox visited the Meeting in 1673, and decided to donate books and pamphlets to the Meeting's library after his return to England. William Penn attended an outdoor Meeting in the garden before the house was built in 1682, and other significant figures such as the Quaker minister John Woolman (1720-72), the scientist John

²⁷⁷Lavoie in Lapsansky and Verplanck, 158-9.

Fothergill, and the philosopher and historian Rufus M. Jones (1863-1948) were known to worship at Third Haven.²⁷⁸

John Woolman, recorded a minister in 1743 at the Burlington, New Jersey Meeting, was known for his travels to many of the colonies (1746-1754) where he would speak publicly against slavery. His publication *Some Considerations on the Keeping of Negroes* (1754) was one of the first written testimonies denouncing slavery and calling for a boycott of products made by slaves. Woolman's *Journal* (1774), considered one of the key texts in Quaker literature, follows the author on a spiritual journey, as he describes his first "opening" as a difficult task in self-discipline following the quieting of the mind and the feeling of the "Inner Light," prompting him to make a testimony for the first time. He explains: "I was taught to watch the pure Opening, and to take Heed, lest, while I was standing to speak, my own Will should get uppermost, and cause me to utter Words from worldly Wisdom, and depart from the Channel of the true Gospel-Ministry..."²⁷⁹ Rising to speak at a Meeting, he would carefully weigh his words so that they derived only from the Gospel, a true felt spirit within. Looking inside in order to reconnect with the "Inner Light," separating the mind from matter, Woolman connected

²⁷⁸Kenneth L. Carroll and Orlando Ridout, *Three Hundred Years or More of Third Haven Quakerism* (Easton, Maryland: Queen Anne Press, 1984).

²⁷⁹John Woolman, "Journal" in West, 255.

with God in spirit and channeled the wisdom through to the Meeting.

Particularly interesting in relation to a discussion of Turrell's work, are Woolman's references to ways in which to live, serving as "channels" to the people (and environment) surrounding us. He explained: "the business of our lives is to turn all the measures we possess into the channel of universal love."²⁸⁰ Turrell's comment on how "our business here [on earth] is not about anything but more fully forming the experience of soul,"²⁸¹ referred to above as a starting point for this dissertation, I believe, echoes Woolman's testament in many ways. Whereas Woolman considers channeling "universal love," Turrell refers to how "the allegory of soul" is an individual's quest in life, searching for and forming an individual experience of the soul, the spiritual within. There is, to my mind, no doubt about Turrell's familiarity with Woolman's writings.²⁸²

The scholar, Quaker historian, and minister Rufus M. Jones is also relevant here because of his liberal view on art. One of the most important twentieth-century reformers of Quakerism, Jones was also an important figure in the Quaker discussion of the visual arts, and one of his famous

²⁸⁰West, 19.

²⁸¹James Turrell, interview by Robert Baldrige.

²⁸²Although there is no evidence in the literature that Turrell is familiar with these authors' writings, it is almost impossible that Turrell (with his strong Quaker background) would be unaware of Penn's, Woolman's and Jones' ministry and writings.

speeches at Haverford (1933) addressed the arts as follows:
"We look back with mild pity on the generations of Haverford students who were deprived of the joy of music and art. The strong anti-aesthetic bias in the minds of Quaker founders and the early managers was, I think, an unmitigated disaster."²⁸³

Jones's book *A Small-Town Boy* (1941) is a colorful account of his early Quaker experiences in South China, Maine. Of particular interest here is its storytelling narrative concerning his childhood experiences at a Meeting presented with the very dry sense of humor so often found in Quaker literature and among Quakers. The essay, for example, begins with a note on how "A Quaker Meeting of the type which prevailed when I was a boy was a unique congregation, which would certainly have perplexed a visitor from the planet Mars, if he had happened to parachute down and had landed in time for Meeting."²⁸⁴

Jones describes how the interior, lit by the light from the outside, through windows pointing towards the outside landscape (as in Live Oak), played a considerable role in his vivid memories of the Meeting:

The plain-looking meeting-house with unpainted seats and undecorated walls stood on a slightly [sic] hill from which we could see the Kennabago Mountains of Western Maine, eighty miles

²⁸³Rufus Jones, 1933, rpt. in Esther Greenleat Murer, ed., *Beyond Uneasy Tolerance* (Wallingford, Pennsylvania: Pendle Hill, 2000).

²⁸⁴Rufus Jones, *A Small-Town Boy* (New York: Macmillan & Co., 1941) rpt. West, 404.

away. It formed the center of a small community of houses and farms, surrounded by a fringe of ancient forests in which, at least to my imagination, roamed deer and moose and bears and where "loup cervies" and catamounts and plain wildcats were waiting to pounce upon anyone who ventured into its depths.²⁸⁵

Although certainly far from the untamed yet all embracing nature in Fox's writings, the imaginative danger of the woods in the little boy's mind came to stand as a contrast to the security of the sheltered Meeting House. As he took a seat on the wooden bench and as the silence in the Meeting became more and more profound, he noted how: "There was no bell, no organ, no choir, no pulpit, no order of service, no ritual," only "silence and then more silence."²⁸⁶

Among the worshippers were Quakers who were widely traveled and whose words particularly inspired the young Jones. As a whisper that would slowly accelerate in volume, a woman would rise and proceed with words pursuing the love of God as her favorite theme. Pointing to the outside, in Jones' words, she recounted how:

the reality of heaven as the home of the redeemed was as sure and as vivid as was Mount Blue, which we could see from the Meeting-House hill. With a mounting voice—still as clear as a bell—she described the glories of the heavenly city. She had in her home a case containing specimens of the twelve stones in the foundations of the celestial habitation, and one could see the eternal home of the soul as she rapturously portrayed it... As she sat down and put on her

²⁸⁵Ibid., 405.

²⁸⁶Ibid.

bonnet and tied its strings, a deep hush spread over us and the canopy of love became a real covering.²⁸⁷

The sky brought down to the Meeting and channeled through the world-traveled and experienced woman, as it was visible in the mountains, stones, and the natural environment, resembles in many ways the visual experience of the "Skyspace" at Live Oak Meeting House. In fact, the description echoes one presented to me by the Houston Quaker Dick Steele during my visit to Live Oak Meeting House in August, 2005. Often volunteering at the Meeting House, his eyes would always light up as he would speak about the Meeting and the experiences Turrell's work can provide. A Catholic woman once told him she had not had such a spiritual experience since the time she visited the Vatican and saw the Sistine Chapel.²⁸⁸

Organizing Peace Vigils every morning on workdays, Steele would drive through the dark morning to open the "Skyspace" for worshippers every day before dawn. Opening the "Skyspace" in the morning hours, Steele enjoys watching the colors change as a small group of people arrives and gathers in silent Meetings. The morning is his favorite. That's when the "Skyspace" experience is strongest, he believes. You can sit and see the darkness turn to light.

²⁸⁷Ibid., 407-8.

That's what it must have been like at the beginning of the world, Steele thinks. It all happened gradually, little by little, as God separated light from darkness. When asked how many people come on a weekday morning as early as 6 am, he answers quietly, "Well, sometimes it's just me..."²⁸⁹

It is this individual encounter that Turrell wants his work to provide. Initially using his studio as a meeting place for invited friends, colleagues, and patrons, Turrell searched for ways in which he could liberate the art experience from the established "system" and generate a new forum for individual encounters outside the market place and institutional setting. *The Mendota Stoppages* did so by being situated inside the artist's studio; *Meeting* was located in an alternative space (P.S.1.); and the *Chapel of Light* was planned to be built directly on the collector's property. All were to be realized without any dealers or galleries. Turrell had full control over the spaces as he created installation pieces that would allow for the viewer to form his/her own experience of the light, be it a spiritual one or an a priori optical encounter. No "authorities" were involved. Rather, one could argue, where spaces had previously been inhabited by authoritative institutions (P.S.1., museums, and galleries), Turrell transformed "the white cube" into a new space by literally opening the roof

²⁸⁸Dick Steele, conversation with author, 8 August 2005, Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas.

to the sky, cutting it open to the universe outside in order to bring it back in. The "skyspaces" open the enclosed space quite literally, contrary to the "perceptual cells" that aim to prompt the viewer to achieve a sense of a wider space mentally. Developed at the same time as Institutional Critique became a widespread artistic concern, it is entirely possible that Turrell developed the "skyspace" series as a response to the concurrent dissatisfaction with the "White Cube." By literally opening the space, he might be thought to challenge the institutional frame and thereby dissipate its power.

The 1980s-1990s literature on the museum as institutional "taste-maker" and "temple of the arts,"²⁹⁰ interestingly paralleled Turrell's investigations of the "White Cube" and his developing it into an experiential chamber of transcendence. Pierre Bourdieu's and Alain Darbel's early sociological study of museum visitors, *The Love of Art* (first published in French, 1969), found a significant difference in the ways different social classes experience an art institution. They argued that the museum

²⁸⁹Dick Steele, conversation with author, 5 August 2005.

²⁹⁰Pierre Bourdieu and Alain Darbel, *The Love of Art - European Art Museums and their Public*, trans. Caroline Beattie and Nick Merriman (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1990), first published in French by Les Editions de Minuit, 1969; Carol Duncan, *Civilizing Rituals, Inside Public Art Museums* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995); and Mieke Bal, "The Discourse of the Museum," in Reesa Greenberg, Bruce W. Ferguson, and Sandy Nairne, eds., *Thinking about Exhibitions* (London: Routledge, 1996), 201-221.

catered to specifically educated social classes, making them feel part of a superior class, while less educated groups were left feeling inferior and excluded. They concluded that the art museum had become a setting for ritual experiences for the upper classes that manifested both their social and political power.²⁹¹

Carol Duncan follows Bourdieu's argument in her book *Civilizing Ritual, Inside Public Art Museums* (1995), though pointing to the museum setting as more of a sacral space where the visitors enact a cultural ritual that also involves an element of performance. She explains:

In art museums, it is the visitors who enact the ritual. The museum's sequenced spaces and arrangements of objects, its lighting and architectural details provide both the stage set and the script - although not all museums do this with equal effectiveness.²⁹²

The strong elements of performance and guidance throughout the studio spaces in Turrell's *Mendota Stoppages* parallel in many ways Duncan's analysis of the cultural museum space. She writes:

Ritual also involves an element of performance. A ritual site of any kind is a place programmed for the enactment of something. It is a place designed for some kind of performance. It has this structure whether or not the visitors can read its cues. [...] But a ritual performance need not be a formal spectacle. It may be something an individual enacts alone by following a prescribed route, by repeating a prayer, by recalling a narrative, or by engaging in some other structured experience that relates to the history or meaning

²⁹¹Bourdieu and Darbel, 12.

of the site (or to some object or objects on the site).²⁹³

Turrell's Live Oak Meeting House, I would argue, does exactly that. Quakers may participate in what Duncan calls a "ritual" by entering the Meeting House to experience the light inside and outside the structure while linking it to the Quaker allegory mentioned earlier. Art lovers visiting the place may experience the light in a more literal manner. Removing the art from a museum setting and replacing it in life as an experience of the actual outside light, Turrell brings the "cosmos closer" to us, both physically via our senses and metaphorically via our associations to the infinite, the ultimate source, which people typically associate with the sky. The ritual, as Duncan suggests, is here the experience of light, yet tacitly inserted into a place designated for worship, it adds an implied spiritual sub-context.

Turrell is still tied to several non-profit organizations.²⁹⁴ Nevertheless his commercial galleries,

²⁹³Duncan, 12.

²⁹⁴Both the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Washington, and the Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, have organized major retrospective shows in the recent past. Richard Andrews, the director of the Henry Art Gallery, raised enough funding to build a large "Skyspace" *Light Reign* (2003) at the Henry Art Gallery accompanied by the exhibition "James Turrell: Knowing Light" (2003-2004). The Henry Art Gallery previously organized a solo show of Turrell's work entitled "Sensing Space," which traveled to the Institute of Contemporary Art, Philadelphia (1993). The Mattress Factory organized a solo show of Turrell's work in 1983 and a second exhibition "Into the Light" in 1994. The Mattress Factory has acquired three of his works that continue to be on

including The Devin Borden Hiram Butler Gallery (Houston), and (since 2003) also Pace Wildenstein Gallery (New York), play a significant and growing role in Turrell's career, including an increasing number of commissions of the "Skyspaces" series.

The number of Turrell's museum commissions of "Skyspaces" has accelerated considerably during the past decade, and includes works spread out over the world: *Space That Sees* (1993) at The Israel Museum, Jerusalem (fig. 66); *The Other Horizon* (1998), MAK, in Vienna, Austria (fig. 67); *Knight Rise* (2001), Scottsdale Museum of Contemporary Art in Arizona (fig. 68); *Tending (Blue)* (2003), Nasher Sculpture Center, Dallas, Texas (fig. 69); and *Light Reign* (2003), The Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, Washington, (fig. 70), only to mention a few. More than fifteen "Skyspaces" are currently in public collections, whereas a growing number are and have recently been built for private collectors.²⁹⁵

The "Skyspaces" play a significant role in Turrell's buildings designed for worship, self-discovery, and transcendence. Turrell's design for the Meditation House, Japan, 1998, inspired by Zen Buddhism, similarly includes a "Skyspace" in the very center of the house. The *Roden*

permanent display: the projection piece *Catso Red* (1967) and the two installations *Pleiades* (1983) and *Danaë* (1983).

²⁹⁵Jori Finkel, "Five Bedroom, Pool and Custom-Built Skyspace," *New York Times*, 24 April 2005, Art 29-30.

Crater, Turrell's long-term project in the Painted Desert, Arizona (discussed in detail in the next chapter), includes several "Skyspaces" - one in the center entitled *The Eye of the Crater*. A new project for a Quaker Meeting House in Philadelphia (including a "Skyspace") is about to begin its early construction phases.²⁹⁶ The increasingly often privately commissioned "Skyspaces," I believe, are to be seen as places for contemplation in a similarly open-ended manner. For believers, they may recall domestic chapels found in other religions, such as Catholicism and Hinduism, where visiting the sanctuary is a part of the daily routine; to non-believers they may appear simply as a white cubical space. Whether in an institutional space, religious building, or private home, Turrell's "Skyspaces" aim to elevate the viewer's experience of light, break down physical boundaries (walls or roof) to reunite us with the cosmos outside.

The popularity and increasing number of "Skyspace" commissions may be explained by the open-ended structure enabling personal spiritual experiences. This would parallel

²⁹⁶Hiram Butler initiated the collaboration between the Chestnut Hill Meeting and James Turrell in 2005. Turrell has since visited the Meeting, and members of the Meeting have been to the *Roden Crater*, Arizona. The architect James Bradberry and the landscape architect Carol Franklin are also involved. A questionnaire has been circulated among the members of the Meeting to better determine the needs and wishes for the new building. For more information see Chestnut Hill Meeting's website, <http://www.quaker.org/chestnuthill/newbuilding.htm> accessed, 14 July 2007.

the historian Robert Wuthnow's analysis of spirituality in the U.S. in *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (1998).²⁹⁷ Wuthnow refers to statistics showing a constant in Americans' beliefs, not as an institutional construct but as an individualistic way of "piecing bits and pieces together" from different religious and spiritual orientations, into a patchwork of one's own individual approach to the spiritual realm. The non-institutional spiritual construct, as described by Wuthnow, would fit the museum visitors' and patrons' enthusiasm for Turrell's work. Unwilling to follow structured and hierarchical belief systems, but open to discovering "mysteries," while penetrating simultaneously the flatness and the infinity of the sky, they are free to zoom back and forth in the subtleties of their experiences and sensations in their own ways.

It is possible that the "Skyspace"'s open-ended structure parallels not only Turrell's Quaker experience (where you can be a Quaker-Buddhist, Quaker-Hindu etcetera.), but also corresponds to a contemporary eclectic Post-Modern belief system, in which all religions are equally open for appropriation.²⁹⁸ The practice of ritual,

²⁹⁷Robert Wuthnow, *After Heaven: Spirituality in America since the 1950s* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 1998), 1-18.

²⁹⁸Wuthnow; Olav Hammer, *Claiming Knowledge: Strategies of Epistemology from Theosophy to the New Age* (Leiden and Boston:

pilgrimage, and spiritual experience is further developed and carried out in Turrell's installations that exist as integrated parts of nature, where it often takes a trip to go out and experience the work serving to enhance the experience of "bringing cosmos closer."²⁹⁹

Brill, 2004); Henry L. Ruf, *Postmodern Rationality, Social Criticism, and Religion*, (St. Paul, MN: Paragon House, 2005).

²⁹⁹James Turrell, "Plato's Cave and the Light Within" (lecture at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, 12 March 2003).

Chapter 4. Nature as Silent Sanctuary

Subtly integrated into the landscape, Turrell's outdoor installations seek to relate to their immediate environment. Inserted directly into the land as underground chambers or above the ground as constructed units, all with openings pointing directly towards the sky, Turrell's goal is "to bring cosmos closer" via a much more direct response to the outdoor environment than in the previously discussed installations.³⁰⁰ Turrell's installations embrace nature as a broad concept that includes the land, the sky, and the outer cosmos, as well as the inner state of a human being, a micro/macro relationship that anchors Turrell in the nineteen sixties counterculture, replete with an interest in the spiritual that draws references from Native American beliefs,³⁰¹ Buddhism, and Quakerism. He invites the visitor to undertake a journey away from the busy and mundane everyday environment, leaving the known (modern and technological world) behind, replacing it with the forces of the changing elements of a natural environment. This experience is intended to generate a sense of displacement in a modern viewer, followed by a sense of reconnecting to the past via natural sources, or metaphorically speaking:

³⁰⁰Ibid.

³⁰¹*James Turrell - Passageways*, documentary directed by Carine Asscher and produced by The Pompidou Center, 2006.

the sources of life.³⁰² Deprived of any tangible horizon or other "worldly" orientation in Turrell's work, the viewer is left as if "floating" in a perceptual "abyss" where he/she is focused on the sky, that (following an initial confusion) may allow for a new, direct, and individual sensation of being in a timeless place, humbled as a human being realizing he/she is merely a smaller particle in a much larger scheme.³⁰³

Turrell adds a sense of timelessness to the pieces by blending historical references from different cultures and times. This chapter will examine Turrell's work in relation to the 1960s-1970s Earthworks, environmental movement, and

³⁰²Some examples of such transformative journeys into nature are well-known. Ralph Waldo Emerson withdrew into nature for days, bringing only a few books with him, including some books on Quakerism. See Howard W. Hintz, *The Quaker Influence in American Literature* (New York, London, Edinburgh: Fleming H. Revell Company, 1940), 49-58; and Frederick B. Tolles, "Emerson and Quakerism," *American Literature*, 10, No. 2 (May 1938), 142-165. Henry David Thoreau's *Walden, or Life in the Woods*, first published in 1854, reflects Thoreau's life in a cabin in the forest near Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts. Thoreau withdrew from society in order to achieve a better understanding of it. Like Turrell, Thoreau was a pacifist and imprisoned for his beliefs. See Owen Thomas, ed., *Walden and Civil Disobedience. Authoritative Texts, Background, Reviews, and Essays in Criticism* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966). Canonical texts on transformative journeys in the 1960s and 1970s include Robert M. Pirsig, *Zen and The Art of Motorcycle Maintenance, An Inquiry into Values* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, Inc., 1999), first published by Quill, 1974.

³⁰³John Bowsher, Senior Administrator, Dia Center, interview with author, 11 July 2007, Dia Foundation, New York. Having collaborated with Turrell for four years, visiting the Roden Crater for monthly meetings with the artist and staff, Bowsher's experience of the work was that it seemed like a timeless place. My own experience visiting *Celestial Vault*, Kijkduin, Holland, was a sense of "fleeting" and "weightless" disorientation, followed by a clear sense of being a smaller particle in a larger universe, while observing the vastness of the sky.

political climate. It will demonstrate how Turrell's work is both open-ended and ecumenical in nature, and tied to the 1960s counterculture and renewed environmentalism, which developed into the founding of the Greenpeace movement. Like to Turrell's work, Greenpeace grew out of the foundations in Quaker philosophy and Quaker tenets.³⁰⁴

Environmental Activism in the 1960s and 70s

In 1969, people the world over experienced the first man on the moon, seated in their living rooms in front of their television sets. Earthworks artist Nancy Holt, widow of Robert Smithson, has suggested that the moon-landing had a tremendous impact on Earthworks artists, because: "it was the first time that we saw the earth as a finite entity."³⁰⁵ At the same time, the United States was at war with Vietnam, a war that seemed endless and meaningless (or worse) to the growing number of youths who began to form the counter-culture movement.

The international environmental organization Greenpeace emerged as part of the "hippie" generation's political activism (specifically the Peace movement in Britain and the U.S.) and was established in 1971 in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Many of its founding members were Quakers.

³⁰⁴Michael Brown and John May, *The Greenpeace Story* (French Forest, Australia: Child & Associates Publishing, 1989), 6-15.

³⁰⁵Nancy Holt quoted in Amy Newman, *Challenging Art: Artforum 1962-1974* (New York: Soho Press, 2000), 167.

Irving Stowe, a Yale-educated lawyer from New England, is often referred to as the father of the Greenpeace Organization. Like Turrell, Stowe was a Quaker and a draft resister, but instead of becoming entangled with U.S. law, he decided to immigrate to Canada, where he settled with his wife Dorothy Stowe in 1966. Jim Bohlen, another founding member of the organization, was a deep-sea diver and radar operator in the U.S. Navy during World War II. Bohlen was in the Pacific during Iwo Jima and Okinawa and when the U.S. dropped the atomic bomb in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945. Disturbed by the growing possibility of a nuclear war in the 1960s, Bohlen became an objector to the Vietnam War, resigned from his job, and moved to Canada. Jim Bohlen and his wife Marie soon became involved with the peace movement and accommodated newly arrived U.S. draft dodgers in their home.

In 1969, the Bohlens, Stowes, and Paul Cote, a young law student from the University of British Columbia, founded the organization "Don't Make a Wave Committee" to protest underground nuclear testing in Alaska. The Stowes introduced the Quaker tenets of bearing witness (nonviolent resistance at the scene of an objectionable activity) and decision-making by consensus (full or widespread agreement among the members) and suggested the organization be run following these ideas. One of the larger events organized by the "Don't Make a Wave Committee" was a demonstration of 10,000

people blocking one of the major U.S.-Canadian border crossings in protest of nuclear testing in 1969.³⁰⁶

In 1970, member Bill Darnell, a young Canadian social worker, creatively merged the two major ideas behind the organization, namely "Peace" and "Green," into one word, "Greenpeace," which the members adopted in 1972.

Greenpeace's focus on environmentalism had its roots in the mid-nineteenth century concern with preservation articulated by John Muir and Henry David Thoreau. In the 1960s and 70s, the organization's goals were to foster campaigns against nuclear testing, whaling, genetic engineering, bottom trawling, and nuclear power. The methods were always those of the Quaker idea of "bearing witness," or social activism, following the ideas of non-violence, lobbying, research, and innovation.³⁰⁷

Earthworks Context

Simultaneous with the growing national focus on environmental issues in the 1960s and 70s, artists also took an interest in these issues. Many of the Earthworks artists became fascinated by new information on the mysterious Nazca drawings in Peru (200 BCE-700 CE), ancient patterns

³⁰⁶Brown and May, 6-15.

³⁰⁷Ibid., 6-15.

discovered in the land in 1929 and took the forms of geometrical or figurative symbols, readable only from a bird's eye perspective. The German mathematician and geographer Maria Reiche proved the layout of these drawings corresponded to celestial events and her findings were published in the book *Mystery on the Desert* in 1968. The book featured the first comprehensive collection of the aerial photographs of the ancient forms and thorough discussions in English, German, and Spanish.³⁰⁸ An article by Robert Morris on the Nazca drawings published in *ArtForum* in 1975 served to inform and create awareness about the indigenous drawings, as it placed them in a magazine of high importance within the discourse surrounding contemporary art.³⁰⁹

Tired of the existing gallery system in New York, the California artist Michael Heizer (b. 1944), for example, made several trips out west to explore the land and began to work in ways that seemed "pure" and remote from the commercial art scene. The state of Nevada, famous for its moon-like and desolate desert landscape, and the strong presence of army bases frequently carrying out nuclear testing, was his chosen place for investigations and ephemeral works developed in dialog with the changing states

³⁰⁸Maria Reiche, *The Mystery on the Desert* (Stuttgart-Vaihingen: Selbstverl., 1968).

of the natural elements. Reflecting on his work in the desert, he stated: "We live in a schizophrenic period. We're living in a world that's technological and primordial simultaneously. I guess the idea is to make art that reflects this premise."³¹⁰ Turrell's photographs of the *Roden Crater* (fig. 71) similarly make it look like a barren landscape, as if it were one of the craters on the moon.

In a dark and rather nihilistic remark, reflecting the concurrent fear of nuclear war, Heizer commented: "The H-bomb, that's the ultimate sculpture. The world is going to be pounded into the Stone Age, and what kind of art will be made after that?"³¹¹ Photographs of the making of his work *Double Negative* (1969-1970) (fig. 72-74) show explosives as the tool of the day used to create negative forms as cut outs situated directly on the rim of the canyon. Destruction and nihilism blend together in this scarification of the earth, in which the "mark making" has turned monumental and exists as an enormous void inserted directly into the natural environment.

A son of the well-known archeologist Robert Heizer, Michael Heizer has had a life-long interest in Native

³⁰⁹Robert Morris, "Aligned with Nazca," *Artforum* XIV, No. 2 (October 1975): 26-39.

³¹⁰Michael Heizer in Julia Brown, *Michael Heizer: Sculpture in Reverse* (Los Angeles: Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), 13, rpt. Germano Celant, *Michael Heizer* (Milan: Fondazione Prada, 1997), 92.

³¹¹Bertram Gabriel, "Works of Earth," *Horizon*, No. 1 (January-February 1982): 48, rpt. Celant, 207.

American cultures and the many ancient monuments and works on the American continent, including the Nazca drawings. Interestingly, Heizer's large-scale project *City* (1972 to the present) (fig. 75) is in the Mojave Desert, Nevada, far away from any Native settlements, unlike Turrell's *Roden Crater*. Heizer's *City* is instead located in an area with the U.S. military nearby and where nuclear tests took place until recently. Heizer's *City* will consist of several mounds in cement and stone that currently read as enormous abstracted sculptural forms resembling ancient pyramids, and prehistoric Earthworks.

Robert Smithson's (1938-1973) early interest in Minimalism and geology also were expressed in an exploration of material and space that included nature and ecology. Smithson saw his iconic *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, Salt Lake, Utah (fig. 76), as a spiral form of gravel entering the water of the lake that could be viewed as either increasing from or decreasing towards its center. Inserted into the landscape, the materials interacted with the natural elements, as salt crystals generated at the rim of the form. Smithson additionally envisioned a "Museum of the Void" to be erected near the *Spiral Jetty* (fig. 77) as a way of educating the

public. It was to include information about geology, crystals and all forms of "voids."³¹²

Robert Morris' *Observatory*, 1971-1977 (fig. 78) is perhaps one of the Earthworks most similar to Turrell's *Roden Crater*. The *Observatory*, located in Emmen, the Netherlands, was inspired by the ancient site of Stonehenge in England, incorporating the positions of the sun into the experience of the work. Here Morris erected a circular vault of dirt surrounded by a second vault that halfway through its circle reverted into a ditch. Openings in the two forms allowed viewers to enter into the structure but also to observe the sunrise at specific times of the years.

Nancy Holt's *Sun Tunnels*, 1973-76, Utah (fig. 79) similarly made use of sunlight as framed by four cement tubes placed on the sand in a layout pointing in the four cardinal directions. Holes drilled into each follow the constellations of astrological signs and at the summer solstice when the light is in zenith, the position of the forms are aligned with the sun as it emerges on the horizon. Like Turrell's *Roden Crater*, Holt's *Sun Tunnels* draw in the light, though on a much smaller scale and with a less scientific end result.

The Roden Crater Project (1974 - in progress)

³¹²Lynne Cooke and Karen Kelly, eds., *Robert Smithson: Spiral Jetty*, exh. cat. (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of

Turrell's *Roden Crater* project (1974 to the present) (fig. 80) is an extinct volcano crater near Flagstaff, Arizona, inside of which the artist is creating interior spaces that will present a range of light experiences, deriving from the light outside. *Roden Crater* is commonly viewed in relation to its immediate context of contemporary Earthworks. John Beardsley's *Earthworks and Beyond*, for example, describes the general concept behind the *Roden Crater* as promising "much magic" but without any further analysis or detailed description of the project.³¹³ Suzaan Boettger similarly includes the *Roden Crater* in her book *Earthworks*, but describes it only briefly as an advanced form of Land Art.³¹⁴

Robert Rosenblum has viewed Earthworks as:

Surely the most spectacular and Romantically heroic efforts to establish some mystical contact between artist and the great universe of earth and heaven out there. As pilgrims to the sublime, breaking free from the confines of the museums and galleries, these new voyagers have gone, often literally, to the ends of this earth in order to make a human mark so that we, and perhaps some future extra-terrestrials, will know that the impulses that produced Stonehenge and the great pyramids are still against all odds alive.³¹⁵

California Press and New York: Dia Art Foundation, 2005).

³¹³John Beardsley, *Earthworks and Beyond: Contemporary Art in the Landscape* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1984), 39.

³¹⁴Suzaan Boettger, *Earthworks, Art and the Landscape of the Sixties* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: University of California Press, 2002), 243-244.

³¹⁵Robert Rosenblum, "A Postscript: Some Recent Neo-Romantic Mutations," *Art Journal* 52, No. 2 (Summer 1993): 74.

He has related Turrell's "painstaking wizardry" to Caspar David Friedrich's *Monk by the Sea* (1809-1810), emphasizing that not only does Turrell choose a life in solitude out in nature to build his project. He also provokes us as viewers to undertake a journey, an artistic pilgrimage, to see the object, as in many other cases of contemporary Earthworks artists:

Perhaps the most ambitious of all Earthworks and all attempts to reunite us pitiful mortals with cosmic time, light and space—is James Turrell's *Roden Crater* in Arizona, an extinct cinder cone in a volcanic field that is being subtly altered by the artist's painstaking wizardry in order to put us in regulated synchrony with the cycles of sun and moon, with the imaginable time of earth's history, and with the changing phenomena of the void of the sky above being suffused with celestial light, day after day.³¹⁶

The reasons for including the *Roden Crater* in the discussions of Earthworks are found in the characteristics of the project consisting of a series of installation pieces inserted into the land and designed in a monumental scale in response to the natural environment and the specific site, similar to Michael Heizer's, Robert Smithson's, Robert Morris', and Nancy Holt's work. The fact that the *Roden Crater* continues to be a work in progress is one plausible reason why it hasn't been analyzed further in the discourse.

Or perhaps it is due to Turrell's commitment to light and insistence on working with the earth as a method to

better integrate the viewer into an experience of light? Turrell states: "I think my work basically involves a painter's sense in three-dimensions."³¹⁷ He relates his artistic considerations to the tradition of painting rather than to that of sculpture as a way of molding a form: "there is no object in my work. There never was. There is no image within it."³¹⁸ When asked in an interview if he is interested in achieving a special atmosphere in his work, Turrell responds:

In working with light, what is really important to me is to create an experience of wordless thought, to make the quality and sensation of light itself something really tactile. It has a quality seemingly intangible, yet it is physically felt. Often people reach out to try to touch it. My works are about light in the sense that light is present and there; the work is made of light. It's not about light or a record of it, but it is light. Light is not so much something that reveals, as it is itself the revelation.³¹⁹

The "experience of wordless thought" echoes the Quaker tenets for a "Silent Meeting" where the member attending the Meeting is seated in silence as he/she attempts to experience the light within.

In an interview with James Lewis (1991), Turrell states very clearly that he is not interested in turning the *Roden Crater* into an Earthwork. He explains:

³¹⁶Ibid., 74-75.

³¹⁷Patricia Failing, "James Turrell's New Light on the Universe," *Art News*, 84 (April 1985): 75.

³¹⁸Jan Butterfield, *The Art of Light and Space* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993), 84.

I'm not committed to Earthworks, per se. I'm interested in taking art into nature, in taking the cultural artifact that we call art into the natural surroundings, so that at the highest level it involves itself with nature—but without being a mark upon nature, as some of the land art pieces are. Land art was the first work to actually be outside the museum and in that sort of context, but my involvement with nature is not so much one that marks upon nature as one that actually uses nature, in particular, light from the sun, moon and stars, to empower the work.³²⁰

That earth is Turrell's material to create the chambers and not his statement is a fact that the artist emphasizes and elaborates on in another interview as follows: "I am not an earthwork artist. I am totally involved in the sky. Let me make this very clear: the main thing is that I am totally interested in space and not in form."³²¹

In many ways, Turrell's investigations and realizations of light installations at the Roden Crater are continuations of the *Mendota Stoppages*, now including natural light and electromagnetic signals from outer space brought into the interior through openings in the crater. At the *Roden Crater*, Turrell is not working with the earth to create objects, but with light to create experiences. In this sense, he is clearly dealing with very different issues than, for example, Heizer's Earthworks project *City*. It is possible that a re-evaluation of the Earthworks canon, broadening it to include performance, political activism,

³¹⁹James Turrell, interview with Julia Brown in Brown, 43.

³²⁰James Lewis, "Open Space for Perception," *Flash Art*, 26, No. 156 (January/February 1991): 112.

and spirituality, similar to the current revision of Minimalist art, would make it more reasonable to include the *Roden Crater*, once it is finalized.

***Roden Crater* - Creating a New Studio**

In 1973, in response to Turrell's site-specific work at the Mendota Hotel, which included structural cuts in the walls and ceiling, his landlord decided to end his lease.³²² As a recipient of the Guggenheim Artist Fellowship the same year, Turrell decided to set out in his Helio Courier plane to look for sites that could accommodate a new project. Flying over most of the western states, he spotted several places, one of them an extinct volcano, the Roden Crater, at the rim of the Painted Desert near Flagstaff, Arizona. The owner, retired railroad magnate Robert Chambers, was not at all interested in selling, but negotiations and conversations slowly led to friendship and eventually Chambers leased the land to Turrell in 1976 and finally sold it to him one year later.³²³

Similar to the *Mendota Stoppages* experienced only by invitation at the Mendota Hotel studio, the *Roden Crater* project has become Turrell's new "alternative space." However, not until it is finalized and open, will most people be able to see it. For now, Turrell's work in

³²¹Butterfield, 84.

³²²Adcock, 115-117.

progress is mainly known from the artist's drawings, photographs, models, and descriptions. The experience of the *Roden Crater* remains for the most part conceptual, not unlike *Music for Mendota* (discussed in Chapter 3). Its magnitude, paired with Turrell's labor and vision, has made it the project for which he undoubtedly is best known.

Once *Roden Crater* is finalized, viewers will be able to make reservations for over-night accommodation at the site, similar to visitors to Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field*, 1974-1977, administrated by the Dia Foundation.³²⁴ One-day group visits may also be possible, organized by reservation only, similar to group visits to a National Park, though this is in the idea stage and a structure for visiting has yet to be determined.³²⁵ As with most of the Earthworks in remote places, the majority of viewers will continue to experience the work from photographic documentation.

Funding & The Skystone Foundation

³²³Ibid., 155-156.

³²⁴To visit Walter de Maria's *Lightning Field*, visitors must register via mail. The current fee is \$200 per person and it is only possible to stay for one night. A small cabin accommodates approximately five visitors at a time. A caretaker is hired to drive the visitors from Quemado, New Mexico to the site (a 45 minute drive) and provide breakfast and a simple vegetarian meal for supper. It is prohibited to photograph the work while on the location. The Dia Center website for the location: <http://www.lightningfield.org/#overview>, accessed 11 December 2005.

³²⁵Richard Andrews, President of the Skystone Foundation, phone interview with author, 15 June 2007.

The *Roden Crater* project has undergone several funding phases. Initially it was funded by the Dia Art Foundation, established in 1974 by the German gallery owner Heinrich Friedrich, Phillipa Pelizzi (née de Menil), and art historian Helen Winkler. When the Dia Art Foundation suffered from financial problems in 1984, the Italian collector and the artist's patron, Count Giuseppe Panza di Biumo, sold a part of his collection to support Turrell and the Roden Crater project.³²⁶ In November 1982, Turrell established The Skystone Foundation Inc. with himself as the president and the Swiss dealer Michael Youst as secretary. Trustees over the years were art patron and philanthropist Melva Bucksbaum (President), art patron and collector Dr. Giuseppe Panza di Biumo (Vice President), architect Frederick Fisher (Secretary-Treasurer), and Nancy Taylor (President from July 1992-May 2007). Curator Julia Brown (at the time Julia Brown Turrell) was the Executive Director from July 1991-July 1995. Nancy Taylor is the foundation's current director, and the current officers and board members are: Richard Andrews, director of Henry Art Gallery (president), Michael Govan, director of Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Suzanne Deal Booth, art historian and philanthropist (vice-president), Janet Schultz, artist, (secretary), and Nancy Taylor (treasurer).³²⁷ The goal of

³²⁶Dodie Kazanjian, *Vogue* (May 1991): 165-177.

³²⁷Nancy Taylor, correspondence to author, 3 July 2007.

the Skystone Foundation is to raise money and operate the administrative side of the construction of the project.³²⁸

In 2002, Turrell again joined forces with the Dia Art Foundation. The then director of the Dia Art Foundation, Michael Govan, was instrumental in implementing Dia's renewed partnership with both James Turrell and Michael Heizer. In collaboration with the Lannan Foundation, Dia sponsored and helped administer the two projects until 2006, when Michael Govan left the organization for a new job at the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.³²⁹

Turrell's *Roden Crater*, like Michael Heizer's *City*, was funded by the Dia Art Foundation, though, in Turrell's case, it has been an on and off relationship. Similar to Turrell, Heizer has also established a foundation that helps raise money and facilitates the building of his gigantic structures. The foundation "Triple Aught" (meaning "nothing," or "zero") was established in 1999/2000 as a non-charitable organization to receive donations for the project. Its president is Heizer, and the board members are Michael Govan (former director of the Dia Art Foundation), Charles Wright (former director of Dia prior to Govan), Virginia Dwan (art dealer), Mary Shanahan (artist and one of

³²⁸Richard Andrews, phone interview with author, 15 June 2007.

³²⁹John Bowsher, Senior Administrator, Dia Center, interview with author, 11 July 2007. Jeffrey Weiss is currently the Director of the Dia Art Foundation.

Heizer's long-time assistants, now Mary Heizer), and Jennifer Mackiewicz (administrator, Dia Beacon).³³⁰

These works in progress for over thirty years may mark a new direction in Earthworks. Here the initial intention of creating artistic structures as autonomous artists free from the commercial art world, has turned into the creation of enormous engineering projects that involve construction workers, building codes, and architectural companies, fundraising and non-profit organizations. This, in a sense, has turned the artist into an "artist-entrepreneur." The large-scale works nevertheless continue to serve as autonomous "artist's spaces" where the artist has full control over the work exhibited and no curator or museum director is involved in the decision-making process.

The two projects will undoubtedly have a very different range of visitors. Whereas Turrell's *Roden Crater* is close to the Grand Canyon, the Hopi and Navajo reservations, and National Parks, Michael Heizer's City project is not near anything particular, and will therefore become a singular destination, similar to De Maria's *Lightning Field*. Where the Skystone Foundation projects that some visitors will be able to stay overnight (there is already a cabin at the site) and some one-day trips will be organized, Heizer's Aught Foundation foresees one-day trips only, possibly

³³⁰Jennifer Mackiewicz, Administrator, Dia Center, interview with author, 19 July 2007, Dia Beacon, New York.

organized with a van arriving in the morning and leaving in the afternoon. Both foundations are considering whether or not the already established entities will be in charge, or if new foundations with endowments for that purpose will organize this aspect of the project in the future.³³¹ In the case of *Roden Crater*, it is also possible a museum or other non-profit organization will adopt the entire project and maintain it.³³²

The Site and Its History

Once finalized, the *Roden Crater* will provide the opportunity for a journey into the colored fields of umber, sienna and rose variations of the Painted Desert, in the southern part of the Colorado Plateau which includes Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks in Colorado and the Petrified Forest National Park in Arizona. The history of the location is not insignificant, as the oldest area dates back 225 million years and geologists of The Petrified Forest National Park continue to discover examples of unknown ancient plant and animal fossils.

The Painted Desert has been occupied for many centuries by several Native American tribes. Both the Sinaguas and Anasazis lived, hunted, traded, and cultivated the soil: the Sinaguas (meaning "without water") lived in the area from

³³¹Ibid., and Richard Andrews, phone interview with author, 15 June 2007.

A.D. 670 to A.D. 1400, and the Anasazi culture (meaning Enemy Ancestors) lived there from the beginning of this millennium to A.D. 1300.³³³ Both cultures resided in semi-subterranean dwellings (pithouses) and used round underground spaces (kivas) for meetings, gatherings, and ceremonial purposes.

Today, Navajos and Hopi Indians largely occupy the terrain of the Painted Desert. The Hopis (traditionally farmers) and the Navajos (traditionally hunters) have historically engaged in land disputes, which were settled in 1943. The Hopis now occupy 2,531.773 square miles and the Navajos 16 million acres in a reservation that covers parts of northern Arizona, southern Utah, and northern New Mexico. According to the 1990 census, the Hopi reservation's population consists of 7,061 persons.³³⁴ The 2000 census shows the surrounding Navajos are currently the largest indigenous people in the United States at around 300,000 people.³³⁵

The Hopis call themselves Hopi'sinom, meaning "People Who Live in the Correct Way," which they see as living in

³³²Ibid.

³³³Linda S. Cordell, *Ancient Pueblo Peoples* (Washington D.C.: Smithsonian Books, 1994), 77-93; and Kendrick Frazier, *People of Chaco, A Canyon and Its Culture* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1986), 13-21.

³³⁴U.S. Census Bureau, <http://www.census.gov/population/www/pop-profile/amerind.html>, accessed 25 October 2007.

³³⁵Stella Ogunwole, ed., *We the People: American Indians and Alaska Natives in the United States*, United States Census Bureau, February 2006.

harmony with all things and all beings, at peace with the surroundings and the Creator, contributing to the benefit of the entire world. Their ceremonies follow the lunar calendar and aim to serve the universe. They consider the Anasazis to be their ancestors and their belief system, building style, and agricultural tradition, resemble the Anasazis' in Arizona and New Mexico, and the current Pueblo Indians' in New Mexico, who are also descendents of the Anasazis.³³⁶

The Navajo people call themselves *Dine'*, meaning "the people." Believed to descend from the Apaches, the Navajos were traditionally a semi-nomadic people of warriors and hunters who supposedly entered northern Arizona around 1000 AD. They occupied settlements abandoned by Hopis and Pueblo Indian and traded and adopted their agricultural traditions. Their traditional buildings include the *hogan*, a sacred building that is either round and associated with female energy, if used for the family and housing purposes, or pyramidal with five triangular sides and associated with male energy, if used for ceremonial purposes. Since 1900, however, the *Hogans* have also taken octagonal or hexagonal forms.³³⁷ The traditional Hogan includes an opening in the roof that allows smoke to exit and light to enter into the

³³⁶Frank Waters, *The Book of the Hopi* (New York: Viking Press, 1963).

³³⁷Stephen C. Jett, Virginia E. Spencer, *Navajo Architecture* (Tucson, Arizona: Arizona University Press, 1981), 14-15.

structure.³³⁸ When a Hogan is built, the construction process is initiated by a Hogan chant in honor of the first Hogan built by the Navajo ancestors, according to their belief system, the gods of Sunrise and Sunset.³³⁹

The *Roden Crater* is situated close to the Navajo and Hopi reservations. Part of the San Francisco Volcanic Field (a chain of volcano craters), approximately 30 miles northeast of Flagstaff, it is about 500,000 years old, and situated near the more recently active crater, the Sunset Crater (fig. 81) and the Sinagua village Wupatki (fig. 82). Eruptions at the Sunset Crater in A.D 1046-65 forced the Sinaguas to flee their saturated red sandstone masonry settlement in Wupatki. Both the Sunset Crater and the Sinagua settlement Wupatki are today national monuments (and tourist attractions) only a short distance from the *Roden Crater*. Turrell himself has long been familiar with the area, as he visited the Sunset Crater as a child while on a trip with his parents.³⁴⁰

The Sinagua and the Anasazi cultures are believed to have occupied the *Roden Crater* between A.D. 1065 and A.D. 1200, possibly overlapping in time.³⁴¹ Both traded or lived

³³⁸Ibid., 19.

³³⁹Paul Oliver, *Dwellings, The Vernacular House Worldwide* (New York: Phaidon, 2003), 174.

³⁴⁰Adcock, 154. (No date or other specifics are mentioned in Adcock's monograph).

³⁴¹Dottie House, "Prehistoric Man in The Cinder Hills," Museum of Northern Arizona,

temporarily outside crater walls, gathering wild seeds, fruits, nuts, roots, and greens, and hunting for birds and smaller animals. They also cultivated the land; rings of basalt stones indicate temporary housing structures, presumably used during the sowing and harvest season. Fragments of chert (a granular type of silica) and obsidian stone tools reflect farming activity near the volcano, as do the rock alignments that are thought to have outlined the ancient fields on and nearby the crater. Both Anasazi and Sinagua cultures are known to have grown corn, which they would grind into flour using a carved grinding stone, a *mano* (a handheld stone), and a *metate* (a stone lab). A set of *mano* and *metate* made of basalt stone from the crater has been found near the rim of the *Roden Crater*, as have fragments of ceramics from the Sinagua culture, classified by archeologists, such as Late Angell Brown and Sunset Brown pottery.³⁴²

Turrell's interest in the *Roden Crater* as a place of history is reflected in his description of it:

Usually art is taken from nature by painting or photography and then brought back to culture through the museum. I wanted to bring culture to the natural surround as if one was designing a garden or tending a landscape. I wanted an area where you had a sense of standing on the planet. I wanted an area of exposed geology like the Grand

<http://www.rodencrater.org/landscape/geoarch/1.htm>, accessed 20 November 2000.

³⁴²Ibid.

Canyon or the Painted Desert, where you could feel geological time.³⁴³

The sense of history and "forgotten sites" is important to Turrell:

The sites I like to use are the ones that, in general, have no function, spaces that are really only inhabited by consciousness. This inhabiting of space by consciousness is the entry of self into spaces through the penetration of vision, which is not limited to just that received by the eyes but also has to do with the entry of self into what is "seen." A lot of spaces are interesting to me when they are generated not by architecture of form but by the overlay of thought. I'm also interested in public spaces that are devoid [of] their function—Mayan and Egyptian ruins, for example, and places such as Mesa Verde. These civilizations adapted natural amphitheaters by building within them to create civic spaces. The fact that they are places of ceremony and ritual and are themselves physically powerful makes them meaningful. The impact of the space of the Gothic cathedral, for example, and the light within it is much more interesting to me than the rhetoric that is spoken there.³⁴⁴

As a Quaker, Turrell is clearly not interested in the Catholic doctrine or its rhetoric. Similar to his interest in changing consciousness, as previously discussed in Chapter 1 as part of an implied narrative in the *Air Mass* catalog, Turrell is interested in the "inhabiting of space by consciousness" at *Roden Crater* through the viewer's "penetration of vision." He is "inhabiting spaces," similarly to the experience of presence he experienced early on in his childhood room. He is also drawing from the past

³⁴³Turrell, *Air Mass*, 58.

³⁴⁴James Turrell, "Interview with James Turrell," in Brown, 39-41.

in an ecumenical way, referencing religious sites significant to past historical cultures.

Turrell has additionally sought to reach out to the neighboring Native Americans, engaging them in the *Roden Crater*, meeting with representatives of both the Navajo and Hopi Elders. He hired members of the Navajo reservation as part of the crew of steel workers constructing a long tunnel inside the crater.³⁴⁵ Turrell's friend Gene Sekaquaptewa, Chief of the Eagle clan and a Hopi Elder, has also been involved with the layout of some of the spaces inside the crater.³⁴⁶

Turrell's inclination to include the Navajo and Hopi tribes in the *Roden Crater* project is a bow toward, and an attempt to work with the ancient history of the site, as well as to include its current neighbors. Turrell's goal to restore the ancient plantation of grasses and bushes as habitats before the land was laid out for grazing, is another way in which Turrell seeks to restore the environment to a state similar to the time before white settlers' arrival and exploitation of the land.³⁴⁷

The Project and Design

³⁴⁵Nancy Taylor, Director of the Skystone Foundation, phone conversation with author, 29 June 2007.

³⁴⁶*James Turrell - Passageways*, documentary directed by Carine Asscher, produced by The Pompidou Center, Paris, 2006.

³⁴⁷Richard Andrews, phone interview with author, 15 June 2007.

The layout of the volcano follows the cardinal directions without interfering with the two archeological sites on the east side of the volcano (fig. 83). A dirt road leads you in a slight curve north of the volcano to the northeast side, where a walkway directs you on foot up the side of the crater to a height of approximately 250 feet above the plain. From here several Native American sites become visible: the Moenkopi Plateau, the First, Second, and Third Hopi Mesas.³⁴⁸ Inserted into a hill with a circular road taking you up to the pueblo, the nearby Second Hopi Mesa looks similar to the access road designed by Turrell at the *Roden Crater* (fig. 84).

At the *Roden Crater* a trail guides you further up to the rim (now 430 feet above the plain) where Turrell plans to build several spaces for visitors' accommodations. Several larger spaces already exist. *The North Space* (1998) (fig. 85) is a cylindrical space, which Turrell considers a *Kiva Space*, similar to the underground chamber traditionally used separately by the men and women in Anasazi, Hopi, and Pueblo communities for ceremonial or formal meetings (fig. 86). Inserted into the ground, it is commonly entered from the top down a ladder through a hole in the roof. The hole simultaneously serves as entrance and outlet for the smoke from the fire inside. One of the largest examples of a kiva

³⁴⁸Craig Adcock, "Light, Space, Time: The Visual Parameters of *Roden Crater*" in Brown, 106.

is the Anasazi kiva (A.D. 900-1100) in Chaco Canyon, New Mexico. (fig. 87) Sixty two and one half feet wide, it would have held several hundred people at a time, seated on benches built into the circular wall.³⁴⁹ A kiva space continues to be the preferred meeting and ceremonial structure among Hopi and Pueblo Indians today.

The North Space includes a circular hole in the ceiling that holds a lens similar to the one in a camera obscura. Here, it projects images of the sky unto white sand placed on the floor. Cloud patterns pass over the surface during the day, suggesting a sand painting painted by nature. During winter, the moon, Jupiter, and Mars appear as light reflections during the night. Seated on benches or standing upright inside the *North Space*, viewers can easily identify the pole star, Polaris. The adjacent square room includes a "Skyspace," a hole in the ceiling pointing directly towards the sky, framing the sky without any reference points to the horizon, land, etcetera. Visitors here can follow the changing sunlight outside as a colored rectangle altering with the sun's appearance on the sky. Through the opening, visitors can re-access an outside ramp leading to the other rooms of the volcano.

The outside path leads to the *East Space* (1996) (fig. 88), a square chamber, similar to *Meeting, P.S.1.*, though here without any interior light source. Instead, an aperture

³⁴⁹Frazier, 69.

facing east catches the early sunlight, which is reflected in the water of an inside pool, acting like a mirror. As the sun rises, the light from the aperture slowly turns into a "veil" of light. The light moves across the room as the dawn turns into day.

Back on the outside ramp, the next stop is the *South Space* (1998) (fig. 89), a space that will include a naked-eye observatory, much like the Danish Astronomer Tycho Brahe's sixteenth-century version.³⁵⁰ Visitors will be able to observe the north polar alignment and sense the rotation of the earth.

From the *East Space*, the viewer may enter into a 1,035-foot long tunnel that passes through the volcano. The *Fumarole Space* (fig. 90) is the first chamber the viewer reaches on the way through the crater. A round chamber with an oculus in the ceiling will include a lens that regulates the amount of light entering into the space and allows for projections of the daily sunrise for 35 to 40 minutes. At sunset the room will generate a twilight zone; a "veil" of light will appear in the space and gradually vanish as the sun goes down. The surface of the walls will be covered with

³⁵⁰Turrell points to Tycho Brahe's observatory in his descriptions of this chamber. See Noever, 166. Tycho Brahe (1548-1601) lived on the island Hven (Latin: Venusia) in the sound between Denmark and Sweden from 1576 to 1597. His observatory of Stjerneborg consisted of five circular crypts dug out in the ground with roofs that could be opened and uncovered. Jan Christensen, *On Tycho's Island: Tycho Brahe and His Assistants 1570-1601* (Cambridge, U.K.: New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000);

plaster mixed from sand from the nearby desert and smoothed into an even surface by sandblasting. The remaining sand from the sandblasting will be placed on the floor as colored pigment. This room may also include a cistern of water, which will receive electromagnetic signals from outer space. A Faraday cage will filter the sounds to include only radio waves from the upper quasar and Sayfert galaxies, which will mix in with the sounds from a nearby waterfall.³⁵¹ In this way the *Fumarole Space* will integrate sounds from the outside environment in a chance-operated sound piece. Turrell's use of outside light and sound resembles his investigations at the Mendota Hotel, now inserted into the natural environment, adding a dimension of bringing the outer universe into the interior space, or, once again "bringing the cosmos closer." It also reflects his initial inspiration from Cage's performances including random sounds, and perhaps more specifically, the experience of silence.

The *Sun and Moon Space* (fig. 91) includes a central white stone placed on a circular surface of black sand. The Sun will be projected on to the stone twice a year, at the time of the solstices, whereas the moon will appear only

Victor E. Thoren, *The Lord of Uraniborg: a Biography of Tycho Brahe* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990).

³⁵¹A Faraday cage is used in science experiments to filter unnecessary sound. It is a metallic enclosure of mesh or metal sheets that prevents electromagnetic waves from passing through,

once in 18.61 years when it reaches its southern most position. Each planet will project a sharp image unto the white stone for approximately two minutes. The dark sand underneath the stone will serve to darken the interior around the stone and heighten the experience of a glowing image inside the dark chamber. Whereas many ancient cultures have studied the sun and the moon, the nearby Hopis are known for their agricultural calendar system based on their astronomical studies of the rotation of the earth, the sun, and the moon, and for predicting the exact position of the sun on the horizon at summer solstice.

The *Eye of the Crater* at its center (Fig. 92) is accessed while continuing through the tunnel leading into a new "Skyspace," this one in the form of a concave hemisphere. Here, situated 38 feet below the crater bowl, an intense round blue circle of the sky can be observed through the oculus in the rim. Benches along the side walls allow viewers to sit for longer periods of time as they watch the exterior light change. On the outside, four sandstone sculptures are situated around the "eye" pointing in the four cardinal directions. Here visitors can choose to lie down, feet up and heads down, and experience the sky, that now perceptually appears as a vaulted sphere.

similar to the effect inside an elevator with no cell phone reception.

Transhistorical and Cultural References

References from across cultures and history merge in *The Moon and the Sun Space* where the reflection of the sun appears at the two solstices, similar to prehistoric examples of monuments and structures in which the sun plays a central role. The oldest of them, Stonehenge, (c. 2000 BCE) (fig. 93) is perhaps the best known, but the pyramids in Giza, Egypt, and Mayan temples are also significant reference points. Khufu's pyramid in Giza, Egypt (2600 to 2480 BCE) (fig. 94), not only must have reflected the sun on its limestone-clad surface, it also featured air and light shafts that (together with mirrors) could illuminate parts of the interior of the tomb. Philosophically, the rays of light would allow the deceased Pharaoh to ascend to the afterlife, riding the rays to the Kingdom of Ra. At *Castillo*, the Mayan temple in Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico (ninth-thirteenth century) (fig. 95), a nine-level square-based pyramid with sculptures of feathered serpent heads placed at the bottom of the stairway, exterior light activated a serpent-like shadow on the balustrades at the time of the spring and fall equinoxes, as if magically animating the power of the serpent-like sculptural forms.³⁵²

Turrell's *Eye of the Crater*, placed at its very center, resembles not only the Kiva but also the traditional Hindu

and Buddhist shrines and temples, as it inspires us to look outward through the oculus and inward around the chamber, analogous to a more spiritual quest reconnecting inward search with outward actions. It draws on the idea of a structure as a microcosm of the universe in which we are but a fragment of a much larger context. Referencing multiple examples of spiritual architecture, Turrell incorporates symbolism from several very different cultures to activate a spiritual experience. In the *North Space*, for example, the sky is literally "brought down" into the interior space on white sand as a projection of the sky and its passing clouds. The *Eye of the Crater* allows us to experience the sky differently from the inside of the chamber and outside in the open crater bowl. In doing so, Turrell utilizes mechanisms to unite the viewer with the sky or the heavens, metaphorically speaking, known throughout history as a fundamental visual element in spiritual architecture. The visual references to Anasazi, Hopi, and Pueblo kiva spaces as mentioned earlier are striking; the round form, inserted into the ground as a chamber aligned with benches for seating, and the opening in the ceiling pointing towards the sky, are basic to these tribal cultures. The allusion to sand painting reflects Navajo tradition and ancient ceremonies tied to healing, offering, and thanksgiving.

³⁵²I. E. S. Edwards, *The Pyramids of Egypt* (Baltimore, Maryland: Penguin Books, 1970); and Robert J. Sharer, *The Ancient Maya*

An opening pointing to the sky has also often been used as an element in ancient Indian shrines centered on an altar or hearth on which offerings to the Gods were burnt, the smoke thought to convey messages or prayers to the heavens. Whether fenced or walled, these shrines were always *hypoethral*, open to the sky.³⁵³ Similarly, traditional Hindu temples in India feature an opening in the roof. Scholar Ananda K. Coomaraswamy explains how the structures are considered man-made microcosms resembling the universe. The body, the temple, and the universe are analogously represented in the structure as the visual frame for the spiritual experience, viewed by Coomaraswamy as essentially a mental process, performed both "inwardly and outwardly."³⁵⁴ Using the temple Kandarya Mahadeo (fig. 96) as an example, Coomaraswamy explains how the temple's doors and windows are believed to correspond to the "doors of the senses" in the body, with one particular opening accessible only by a ladder or a rope. In the body this opening is called the *brahma-randhra* (God-Aperture), or *Eye of the Heart*, and is represented by the cranial foramen. Closed after birth and thought of as the opening from which the spirit departs the body at death, it is ritually reopened after a person's

(Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 1994).

³⁵³Ananda K. Coomaraswamy, "An Indian Temple: The Kandarya Mahadeo," *Art in America* 35 (1947), rpt., in Roger Lipsey, ed., *Selected Papers, Traditional Art and Symbolism* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1977), 3.

³⁵⁴Coomaraswamy in Lipsey, 4.

death, or it can be reopened during spiritual and meditative practice.³⁵⁵ The opening is represented in the temple by an oculus in the ceiling, covered by a circular roof-plate resting on rafters resembling the spokes of a wheel or the ribs of an umbrella. Open, yet covered, the *Agga-dvara* (Upper door) is believed to function as a doorway through which elevated spirits or "skyfarers" can make their departure, uniting in spirit with the outside universe.³⁵⁶

Examples in Western culture include the Roman Pantheon 125 AD (fig. 97) with its characteristic oculus in the center of the dome. Built as a temple to the Gods (not a specific one, but multiple), the light of the oculus wanders, like a sundial, as a projection of the sun over the walls of the interior dome. Similarly, Neoplatonic symbolism of the seventeenth century, as for example Anastasius Kircher's plate from *Ars magna Lucis*, Rome, 1665 (fig. 98), shows beams of light representing knowledge in a Platonic sense, achieving a status of divine light when reflected in the cave of the body.³⁵⁷ The *South Space's* aim, to awaken a sensation of the earth's rotations following a projected

³⁵⁵Similar to the Buddhist Bardo experience, see W.T. Evans-Wentz, ed., *The Tibetan Book of the Dead; or, The After-Death Experiences on the Bardo Plane, According to Lama Kazi Dawa-Samdup's English Rendering* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

³⁵⁶Coomaraswamy in Lipsey, 5-6.

³⁵⁷Alexander Robb, *Alchemy and Mysticism* (Cologne, Lisbon, London, New York, Paris, Tokyo: Taschen, 1997), 263.

image of the sky inside the underground chamber, corresponds to Turrell's interest in Plato's cave as an allegory of the human search, both physically and spiritually.³⁵⁸

The Roden Crater and Quaker Tenets

"The Lapsed Quaker Ware" (1993 to the present)

Transhistorical references intertwine with Turrell's personal history and his grandmother's suggestion of entering into the Meeting House "to greet the light." Turrell has not only invited members of the Quaker community to visit the crater and arranged Meetings inside the *Eye of the Crater*,³⁵⁹ he has also developed a series of basalt ware (black ceramic pieces fired at a high temperature), entitled "Lapsed Quaker Ware" (1993 to the present) (fig. 99). Bowls, pitchers, plates, salt and pepper sets, tureens, serving plates, and coffee cups with incised geometric patterns displayed on hand-craft cherry wood dressers, cabinets, and tables, create a setting where the elements complement each other, designed as both possibly collector's items, and utensils for visitors to use while staying at the *Roden*

³⁵⁸James Turrell, "Plato's Cave and the Light Within" (lecture at Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 12 March 2003).

³⁵⁹Mary McKerall, Member of Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas, conversation with author, 7 August 2005, Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas; and Chestnut Hill Meeting, Building Process History, <http://quaker.org/chestnuthill/newbuilding/process-history.htm>, accessed 23 July 2007.

Crater.³⁶⁰ The spearheads and tools made out of basalt by the Sinagua tribe found at the crater may have inspired the idea for Turrell's design, but they specifically took form in reference to Turrell's more personal history and childhood experiences while growing up in a Quaker family in Pasadena.

While visiting a small local museum at Temple Newsome, Leeds, England, during an artist residency at the Henry Moore Sculpture Trust in Yorkshire, near Leeds, England, in 1993, Turrell discovered examples of the eighteenth-century potter and Quaker Josiah Wedgwood's basalt ware, also called Quaker or funeral ware. Turrell realized the bowls and pitchers reminded him of the rustic china his parents had used in his childhood home.³⁶¹

Josiah Wedgwood (1730-1795) was a Quaker, born in Burslem, Staffordshire, England, and a child of a family of generations of potters dating back to his great-great grandfather Gilbert Wedgwood who settled in Burslem, Staffordshire in 1612.³⁶² Josiah Wedgwood continued the family tradition, which he inherited directly from his father Thomas Wedgwood, a potter who invented a new glaze that included salt as a mineral. Josiah Wedgwood

³⁶⁰Elisabeth Cunnick, Director of A/D Gallery, conversation with author, 25 May 2003, A/D Gallery, New York.

³⁶¹Brooks Adams, "Three to Get Ready: James Turrell," *Art in America* 88, No. 1 (January 2000): 82.

³⁶²Samuel Smiles, *Josiah Wedgwood* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1892), 9.

experimented a great deal with clay and glazes, and his work soon caught the interest of the Royal family. In 1765, he was appointed Queen Charlotte's potter; his first order was a tea set, which he made in a light and lustrous cream color glaze. Queen Charlotte suggested Wedgwood call it "The Queen's Ware." About 1766, Wedgwood produced his first series of unglazed black porcelain, to which he ascribed the name "basalt ware" for its likeness to basalt stone (fig. 100). A long lost technique dating back to the Etruscans challenged Wedgwood to experiment with the amounts of minerals and the firing process until he successfully revived the tradition.³⁶³

Wedgwood was also a member of the Lunar Society, a club formed in 1765 in Birmingham, England, by some of the leading industrialists, natural philosophers, inventors, and intellectuals at the time. At a time when no street lighting was in place, the members of the society navigated their way home after meetings under the light of the moon. Their meetings were always scheduled around full moon, hence their name, and they cheerfully called themselves the "lunatics" for that reason. Members of the society included the manufacturer and engineer Matthew Boulton; the physician, natural philosopher, physiologist, inventor and poet Erasmus Darwin (Charles Darwin's grandfather); the gun-maker and Quaker Samuel Galton Junior; chemist, geologist,

³⁶³Ibid., 85.

industrialist and inventor James Keir; the natural philosopher, theologian, political theorist, and educator Joseph Priestley; Josiah Wedgwood; the engineer and inventor James Watt, whose improvements to the steam engine were of fundamental importance to the Industrial Revolution; the clockmaker and scientist John Whitehurst; and the botanist, geologist, chemist, physician and the discoverer of digitalis William Withering.³⁶⁴

By mid-eighteenth century, Wedgwood's business had grown to include trading with the American colonies and Wedgwood began to import Cherokee clay from South Carolina via Charlestown by his agent Thomas Griffith in 1767. It was an endeavor not without problems as the Cherokee Natives understandably were very unhappy with the exploitation of their land and the mining of ceramic clay on their territories. The Cherokee clay was, however, transported to Wedgwood's potteries and soon used for his famous Queen's Ware, and also for the basalt ware.³⁶⁵ The basalt ware was soon produced in great numbers, and its endurance and simplicity appealed particularly to the Quaker communities in England, Ireland, and the United States.³⁶⁶

³⁶⁴Jenny Uglow, *The Lunar Men: Five Friends Whose Curiosity Changed the World* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2002).

³⁶⁵Bruce Tattersall, "Josiah Wedgwood and America: His Trade and His Politics" in Bruce Tattersall, ed., *Wedgwood Portraits and the American Revolution*, exh. cat. (Washington D.C.: National Portrait Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, 1976), 14-15.

³⁶⁶James Turrell, conversation with author, February 15, 2007.

By 1998, Turrell was collaborating with the Irish ceramicist Nicholas Mosse (also of Quaker heritage) on a new set of basalt ware designs, following Wedgwood's designs, this time for the crater. The two worked very closely together on what they entitled "Lapsed Quaker Ware," a series of black and white tableware with geometric patterns incised into the surface (fig. 101). Turrell's initial idea was to use volcanic emission from the *Roden Crater* as material for the ceramic forms, and perhaps also as a way of responding to the history of the site and the basalt tools and grinders of the Sinagua tribes found on the outside crater walls.

Unfortunately, the volcanic emission proved both too costly and complicated to ship across the Atlantic, and much too difficult to control in the kiln.³⁶⁷ The process required extreme precision during the firing process; a few degrees too cold would turn the black forms silver, while a few degrees too hot simply melted the forms.³⁶⁸ Other more manageable materials were introduced following Wedgwood's recipe and a series of pitchers, cups, plates, bowls, etcetera, was soon fabricated in Mosse's workshop in Ireland. Following Wedgwood's tradition, Turrell and Mosse experimented with a set of white and a set of black basalt ware. They preferred the black for its darkened surface and

³⁶⁷Elisabeth Cunnick, Director of A/D Gallery, conversation with author, 25 May 2003.

the possibility that light might flicker on the patterned surface. When in use at the crater, the complete set is intended to evoke traditional Quaker domestic interiors. Its tradition will continue in other Quaker interiors, as it has also been promised as a gift from Turrell to the members of the Live Oak Meeting House along with furniture designed by the artist for the interior.³⁶⁹

Turrell's and Mosse's collaboration developed into a warm friendship, which included many long discussions about Quaker tenets and Quakerism. They explored the designs of old Quaker ware, its tradition, and aesthetics. It is not unlikely the two would have embraced Wedgwood as kin, not only for his Quaker interest, reflected in his anti-war statements expressed in letters, but also his open interest in scientific investigations and inventions, which he used to challenge himself while developing his ceramic production.

Turrell's and Mosse's collaboration also resulted in the building of a "Skyspace" entitled *Airmass* (1993), installed on Nicholas Mosse's estate in Ireland. The catalog *Airmass* discussed in Chapter 1 was published that same year,

³⁶⁸ Ibid.

³⁶⁹ Mary McKerral, Member of Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas, conversation with author, 7 August 2005.

including the invaluable autobiographical and poetic stories of his childhood experiences in a Quaker family.³⁷⁰

The Roden Crater and the Meeting House Experience

The interior spaces of Roden Crater, particularly *The Eye of the Crater*, *The East Space*, are not only very similar to Turrell's *Meeting at P.S.1* (1986), but also his design of Live Oak Meeting House, both essentially based on his memories of his childhood. The sparse white interior with benches lining the walls and an opening in the ceiling pointing directly towards the sky, found in the center of the Roden Crater's spaces, bear strong references to Turrell's design for the Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas. The distinct awakening experience of the senses achieved by isolating and directing the viewer's gaze

³⁷⁰In his quest into Quaker history, Turrell chose to show "Lapsed Quaker Ware" for the first time at a Quaker boarding school in England. In his book *Portrait in Grey*, John Pushon mentions that only three pictures were accepted among British Quakers in the 19th century: Benjamin West's engraving of William Penn's treaty with the Indians; the Interior of a Slave Ship; and the Plan of the Building of Ackworth School. See Pushon, 131. Interestingly, Turrell chose to show the "Lapsed Quaker Ware" at the Ackworth School in Yorkshire, England. See Adams, 82. Ackworth was founded by the Religious Society of Friends in 1779, as a boarding school for Quaker boys and girls. Although only half of the pupils today live on the school territory, it continues as a school that follows Quaker principles. As a way of creating dialog around art and spirituality, the artist Chris Taylor conducted an additional artist's project responding to Turrell's work, June 1998. A group of children made prints of Turrell's "Lapsed Quaker Ware," and mailed them as postcards to the artist in Flagstaff. On each of the cards, they wrote questions for Turrell (about being an artist, a Quaker, etc.), who answered them and returned them to the students. See Ackworth Homepage <http://www.ackworth.w-yorks.sch.uk/lqw/schedule.html>, accessed 20 June 2007.

towards the sky, operating with two different light sources prompting the eye to slowly zoom in and out, both seen in the installation *Meeting* at P.S.1 and the Live Oak Meeting House, is reworked here into observation spaces inside the volcano.

Turrell's use of visual references to spiritual architecture and monuments across cultures and time essentially serves to eliminate all boundaries between past and present. Analogies between the sacred and spiritual meeting places by Native Americans and traditional Quaker Meeting Houses are intended to prompt us to focus on the contemporary space we are placed in, both physically and mentally. Generating a more holistic sense of our presence, part of a past and a future, Turrell blends a variety of historical references, including his own more personal recollections of his childhood raised as a Quaker.

The Allegory of the Inside Versus the Outside

Turrell's idea of an allegory, as a symbolic representation of how the soul inhabits the body but has a life outside it, the inside reflecting the outside, applies not only to Hindu and Buddhist beliefs, but is also one of the most fundamental tenets in Quaker belief, established at its very beginning by its founder George Fox. Fox's experiences of spiritual "openings," a Quaker term for channeling divine energy and experiencing it through the

body, would often take place in natural settings, as he wandered from village to village in seventeenth-century England, Scotland, and Ireland.³⁷¹ In 1652, for example, Fox had a vision from the top of Pendle Hill in Lancashire, England, of a "great people to be gathered."³⁷² Descending from the mound, he was met by a large number of people joining him in his spiritual quest. This moment is referred to by the Friend's Society as the beginning and forming of Quakerism and the Society of Friends. Interestingly, the elements of a path, a mound, leading to a profound experience, are also key elements in Turrell's *Roden Crater*. These elements are also seen in several of his other outdoor installations. The *Celestial Vault* in Kijkduin, The Hague, Holland, is one example.

The Celestial Vault in Kijkkuin (1996)

A fully realized project, *The Celestial Vault* in Kijkkuin (1996), near The Hague, Holland (fig. 102), consists of an elliptical mound of sand located in a constructed recreation area built of rubble from the bombings of The Hague during World War II. Ninety-eight feet wide and 131 feet long and approximately 16 feet high, the

³⁷¹Nickalls.

³⁷²Ibid., 103-104.

mound looks like a prehistoric dolmen, which can be entered by climbing a row of wooden steps (fig. 103) up to a 19.5-foot-long concrete tunnel that leads into the center (fig. 104). Situated in a field of green grass with no reference points to the horizon, Turrell has recreated the bowl of the crater with just one element: a monumental form in sandstone, large enough for two people to lie down in a slightly tilted position with their heads down and their feet up (fig. 105). Similar to the experience at *Roden Crater*, a Ganzfield effect will emerge and the sky appears like a vault now facing the silvery light of the Netherlands. An adjacent mound (fig. 106 & 107) includes a similar limestone sculpture, here for observation of the open landscape. Walking up the mound, it, similar to Morris' *Observatory*, resembles prehistoric stone settings as the huge stone is placed on the very top of the mound. Looking out over the flat Dutch landscape, the viewer here is reunited with the horizon and the vast open landscape (fig. 108).

Similarly to Turrell's *Roden Crater*, Robert Morris' *Untitled, Reclamation Project, 1979*, King County, Washington State (fig. 109), reclaimed a desolate industrial area in King County, Washington, and provided a space for the citizens to meet for concerts, performances, or simply to enjoy nature in an amphitheater setting of three oval levels

narrowing in towards the center.³⁷³ Not dissimilar to Robert Morris's 1979 *Untitled, Reclamation Project*, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, and *Spiral Hill*, 1971, Emmen, Holland (fig. 110), Turrell's *Roden Crater* similarly employs a curvilinear form, now intended to become in part a site that aims to also reclaim and preserve the land. Turrell plans to plant vegetation present on the land prior to the settlers' immigration into the state of Arizona, as a way of returning the land to its original state.³⁷⁴

The Irish Sky Garden (1990)

Turrell's design for the *Irish Sky Garden* (1990) (fig. 111) includes a very similar element in the form of a mound. A project designed as part of the Irish landscape south of Cork, Ireland, though never completed, consists of four outdoor observation spaces embedded in the land (fig. 112): an elliptical vault, a mound, a pyramid, and a yard-like enclosure. The crater would have generated an experience of a vaulted sky; the sky when viewed from the mound would appear round and from the pyramid intensely flat, almost like a veil or glass surface hanging over the spectator. In

³⁷³Despite the artist's goal for this project, there exists no documentation of public use of the piece, possibly due to its remote location. Harriet F. Senie, *Contemporary Public Sculpture, Tradition, Transformation and Controversy* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 166.

³⁷⁴Nancy Taylor, Director of the Skystone Foundation, phone conversation with author, 29 June 2007.

addition to references to pyramids, burial mounds, etcetera, Turrell in this project decided to include a yard-like enclosure much like the historical Quaker cemeteries (fig. 113). Typical examples include Idle Burial Ground, Yorkshire, England (1690), a field of grass with a row of benches built into the natural stone wall (fig. 114); Shelter Island, New York (1690) (fig. 115); Darley burial ground (1688-1842) in Yorkshire, England, (fig. 116); and Coalbrookdale in Shropshire, England (1763-1982) (fig. 117). Drawing upon references to the past, Turrell includes allusions to his own Quaker past. Where Quakers traditionally avoided tombstones and other physical markers leaving the burial ground open and bare, only marked by the stonewalls and possible benches, Turrell deliberately incorporates an open field into the design of *Irish Sky Garden*.

Turrell's comments on the *Irish Sky Garden* additionally address the Quaker concept of the outside reflecting the inside as an allegory now directly experienced in the landscape:

The qualities of inside out and outside in are important in the manner that the boundaries of the Irish landscape to the sky is worked or made malleable. In the end, we are gardening or tending the sky. Making malleable the physical boundaries is analogous to working the boundaries of self. It is unimportant whether the picture is passed through physically or merely with the penetration of vision. It is the same quality of border whether accomplished physically or through the eyes. For this reason, landscape as allegory for

thought becomes this tending of the sky through the shaping of the landscape, which borders it. In this sense you are not as much looking into a garden as you are looking out from one.³⁷⁵

Fox used the same "allegory" of the outside manifested as a mirror inside the individual, when in 1682 he addressed the early colonial settlers in Philadelphia urging them always to consider their surroundings, dignity, and moral decency.³⁷⁶ Fox believed that cultivating nature was not just growing crops but ethically sensing and living the spirit of God as reflected in oneself.

Turrell, whose interest in Quakerism has become quite well-known in the Quaker community, was recently invited to write the foreword to a recent book by Silas B. Weeks, entitled *New England Quaker Meetinghouses, Past and Present* (2002). In it, Turrell introduces the reader to the Quaker concept of the inward light reflecting the outer realms and God as present inside and outside the human being as follows:

The temple of the Living God is but the human body. And Quakers felt that direct experience of the Inner Light was of utmost importance. But, this experience is enhanced when meeting together, "Where two or more are gathered." And the gathering meeting empowered the assembled to go inside to greet the Light, to go inside to gain outlook. The clear relation of that within to that without bespeaks the concern that the life lived

³⁷⁵Noever, 186.

³⁷⁶Fox in "An Epistle to All Planters and Such Who Are Transporting Themselves into Foreign Plantations in America," (1682) rpt. Tolles, 3.

reflects the Inner ideal. As soul is embodied, so is the body housed.³⁷⁷

The links between the body and the soul, as described here by Turrell, as tied to Quakerism, are also found in Hinduism and Buddhism, as previously described by Coomaraswamy, analogously related to the architectural structure of the temple or the sanctuary. According to Fox, the building is unimportant. People constitute the core of the church, and it is in their bodies, that the "temples" are to be found. They reflect on the interior in which the exterior mirrors itself in silence, as God's divine light reveals itself. The meditative state, however, is one that ecumenically resembles the meditative state in Buddhism and Hinduism, when the body and the mind quiet down and the presence of divine being is experienced.

Quaker Literature and Nature

The primacy of nature so important to Turrell is a theme expressed throughout Quaker literature. Nature understood in its broadest context to include the earth and the firmament, is a commonly used metaphor for a divine and guiding presence in Quaker literature. The poet John Greenleaf Whittier, a Quaker and abolitionist, wrote in his poem "The Branded Hand" (1845) about Captain Jonathan Walker

³⁷⁷James Turrell in Silas B. Weeks, *New England Quaker Meetinghouses - Past and Present* (Richmond, Indiana: Friends

(1799-1878), who in 1844 assisted seven slaves in escaping to the Bahamas. When they were caught, Captain Walker was branded with the letters "SS" for "slave stealer" on the right hand. Whittier describes how it became clear to Walker what he needed to do while sailing under the stars: "God's stars and silence taught thee as His angels only can, That the one, soul sacred thing beneath the cope of Heaven is Man..."³⁷⁸

Ralph Waldo Emerson (a great admirer of George Fox, though not a member of the Friend's Society) was influenced by the Quaker doctrine in his use of nature as a refuge for solitude and transcendence. Emerson had many Quaker friends, wrote a lecture on Fox (unpublished),³⁷⁹ and took some books on Quakerism with him when he went into seclusion to decide whether or not he should remain in the ministry. Emerson defined nature in a broad way: "Nature, in the most common sense, refers to essences unchanged by man; space, the air, the river, the leaf."³⁸⁰ Emerson saw nature as a teaching tool for understanding the inward and outward nature: "The use of natural history is to give us aid in supernatural

United Press, 2001), vii.

³⁷⁸John Greenleaf Whittier, "The Branded Hand" (1845) in John Greenleaf Whittier, *Anti-Slavery Poems, Songs of Labor and Reform* (New York: The New York Times & Arno Press, 1969), 111-115.

³⁷⁹Hintz, 49-58; and Tolles, 142-165.

³⁸⁰Ralph Waldo Emerson, "Nature," 1836, rpt. David M. Robinson, ed., *The Spiritual Emerson* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003), 24.

history; the use of the outer creation, to give us language for the beings and changes of the inward creation.³⁸¹

Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass* (1855) is often discussed among Quakers for its references to nature and Quaker philosophy.³⁸² Whitman was born to Quaker parents and his father sympathized with the Quaker minister Elias Hicks. Like Emerson, Whitman was also not a practicing Quaker but wrote about Elias Hicks' trips into the landscape of Long Island, describing them as profound lessons of learning about respect for his surroundings and other lives.³⁸³

In *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman refers to how he sees himself as divine "inside and out,"³⁸⁴ and he sees his world as formed of more than him as an individual:

I believe a leaf of grass is no less than the
journey-work of the stars,
And the prismire is equally perfect, and a grain
of sand, and the egg of the wren,
And the tree-toad is a chef-d'oeuvre for the
highest,
And the running blackberry would adorn the parlors
of heaven,
And the narrowest hinge in my hand puts to scorn
all machinery,
And the cow crunching with depress's head
surpasses any statue,
And a mouse is miracle enough to stagger
sextillions of infidels.³⁸⁵

³⁸¹Ibid., 34.

³⁸² These discussions often take place in groups in the Quaker Meeting Houses with summaries placed on the internet for Quakers and other interested people to consider. See Whitman and Quakers <http://www.supenn.com/whitman.html>, accessed 3 July 2006.

³⁸³ Walt Whitman, "The Blood of Christ...No More Effectual than the Blood of Bulls and Goats," rpt. West, 326-7.

³⁸⁴ Walt Whitman, "Song of Myself" (1891-92), rpt. Walt Whitman, *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992), 211.

³⁸⁵ Ibid., 217.

Whitman saw nature in a leaf of grass as similar to a world of stars, similar to the way Quaker allegory posits that the soul inhabits body but has a life outside it.

The *Irish Sky Garden*, the *Celestial Vault* in Kijkduin, and the *Roden Crater* are all subtle integrations into the landscape with links to local history. Once we understand Turrell's "Skyspaces" and landscape installations as prompting the experience of the allegory of soul, we begin to see the enhanced experience of the inside versus the outside. Symbolically reuniting us with dolmens, pyramids, kivas, and burial grounds across time and cultures, Turrell brings us to a place that is intended to remind us of our own immortality, responsibilities for others, and connection to a larger context.

Open-ended as a spiritual quest, where you don't have to be a Quaker, Buddhist, or belong to any other identified belief system, but just experience - Turrell's work prompts us to see ourselves as human beings in relation to our immediate environment - as smaller particles in a larger universe, in which we need to take responsibility for cultivating our nature - inside and outside, the goal is to bring us closer to ourselves and thereby "bring cosmos closer."

Chapter 5: Conclusion: Bringing The Cosmos Closer

Turrell's upbringing as a Conservative Quaker learning nineteenth-century Quaker theology directly from his grandmother had a profound effect on him. Her invitation to join her in "seeking the light within" at the Conservative Villa Street Meeting House turned into a lifelong inspiration to him. Even though Turrell claims he still doesn't know "exactly what she meant," he took it quite literally, and in a sense he still does.³⁸⁶ The Quaker emphasis on light is evident in his light installations, created in all stages of his career. Although the evolution of his work does not follow a straight trajectory, his series of skyspaces, spiritual structures, and outdoor pieces all reflect Quaker tenets.

The series of "Skyspaces" all have physical elements that resemble Quaker Meeting Houses, in particular the white interiors and wooden benches. The cut in the ceiling, which opens the interior space directly to the sky, reflects the Quaker allegory of the inside as reflecting the outside. Quaker influence is most apparent in his spiritual structures, especially the actual Meeting House that he designed, Live Oak Meeting House, Houston, Texas. At this point in his career (1995) Turrell had already created the Lapsed Quaker Ware, an indication of his growing awareness of Quaker influence in his work and life. Live Oak is a

salient example of the Quaker tenet of simplicity. Without any visual distractions Turrell's design responds to Fox's suggestions of Quaker worship in a pre-existing building, ship, or barn, stripped of any unnecessary adornments, or preferably directly in nature. The series of outdoor installations directly respond to the latter.

The "Perceptual Cells" constitute the least obvious to Turrell's Quaker heritage. Their sinister qualities reflect Turrell's biographical experiences of imprisonment but they may also be seen in the Quaker context of non-violent resistance to violence and powers of authority. It was in the darkened space of a prison cell that Turrell realized the mind experiences light even in darkness, and is capable of mentally expanding a narrow enclosure. The "Perceptual Cells" place the viewer in similarly narrow spaces, resembling solitary confinement in order to allow them to experience the human mind's capacity to overcome a traumatic event by experiencing light.

Turrell's has commented variously on his Quaker heritage. He sees himself as inspired by the early Friends, and calls himself an Old Testament Christian, similar to the Essenes, a Judaic religious group said to have flourished between the 2nd century BCE and 1st century CE.³⁸⁷ Located in the desert near the Dead Sea, the Essenes are widely

³⁸⁶James Turrell, interview for *Art 21*, PBS.

³⁸⁷James Turrell, interview by Robert Baldrige.

believed to have written the Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered nearby in 1947. Similar to the Quaker community, the Essenes believed in peace and had lengthy communal meetings; abstained from criminal and immoral conduct; and had no slaves. They were mystics and believed in the Kabbala: some of their religious rituals were similar to those of the Hassidic Jews.³⁸⁸

At the same time, Turrell also refers to himself as a "Universalist Quaker."³⁸⁹ Universalist Quakers take great interest in all world religions as exemplified in the writings of Rufus M. Jones.³⁹⁰ Among other things, Jones acknowledged art as a possible vehicle for spiritual elation. Turrell, like Rufus M. Jones, acknowledges influences from different times and cultures. The artist's clear sense that we are all linked together in a larger whole is an example of "Universalist" thinking, and makes it possible to link his interest in the spirituality of the Essenes across the centuries to contemporary Quakerism. Specifically the *Roden Crater* with its implicit and explicit references to various spiritual traditions may be seen as reflecting Quaker Universalism.

³⁸⁸Hayim Ben-Sasson, ed., *A History of the Jewish People* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1976), 272-274.

³⁸⁹It is possible that this interest in Universalist Quakerism stems from Turrell's work with Robert Vogel at the Orange Grove Meeting House.

Turrell's work with his Quaker past and identity continues today as he lectures and develops designs for new Meeting Houses, currently for the Chestnut Hill Meeting in Philadelphia. The plans are developed following the Quaker process of consensus; circulated queries show a community highly involved with the entire process. When asked which qualities would need to be present for the polled to feel a space is spiritual or inspirational, the majority in 2006 responded that "simplistic beauty and elegance" is of importance, as is "natural and comfortable lighting" and acoustics.³⁹¹ The general consensus of the Meeting has expressed a wish for simplicity in the Meeting House design, to be accomplished by minimal colors, patterns, and adornment, and possibly an inspiration from Japanese temples. They are interested in a "warmth [with a] sense that the space [can] be a space of consolation, but [also a] coolness, in a way that goes along with the hush and sense of being small."³⁹² While some members have voiced their opposition to the idea of having an "art work" inside the Meeting

³⁹⁰Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion* (New York: Russel & Russell, 1970).

³⁹¹Chestnut Hill Meeting House Questionnaire, <http://quaker.org/chestnuthill/surveyresults.htm>, accessed 23 July 2007.

³⁹²Ibid.

House, the majority at Chestnut Hill would like to see a piece by Turrell inside their new Meeting room.³⁹³

Turrell continues to play a significant role in the discussion of the role of art in Quaker life. Groups of Quakers interested in the arts have formed and new research reveals that there have always been artists among Friends, as there continue to be today.³⁹⁴

Nevertheless, Turrell is still uneasy about having his work "labeled" as spiritual, and continues to emphasize the existence of different religions, and not just one.

Turrell's work is, however, often seen as spiritually driven and viewers often report that they are having spiritual experiences while observing the light. John Bowsher, for example, reports that practically everybody, from construction workers to patrons visiting the *Roden Crater*, appears to experience the work as an ecumenical space.³⁹⁵

Londoner Zoe Dale responds to one of Turrell's many "skyspaces" as follows: "It allows for that precious quality of being in the moment."³⁹⁶ One comment book at *The Elliptic Ecliptic* outside the town Penzance in Cornwall, Britain, states: "It is as though I've always seen this way yet never

³⁹³Ibid.

³⁹⁴Some of the more famous are actors like James Dean, Ben Kingsley, and Judi Dench; art historian Roger Fry; musician Joan Baez; and writer James Michener.

³⁹⁵John Bowsher, Senior Administrator, Dia Center, interview with author, 11 July 2007.

before" and "Thank you for making me look at the sky."³⁹⁷

The fact that *Meeting at P.S.1.* and *Light Reign* at the Henry Art Gallery are at times used for weddings also reflects viewers' perception of them as spiritual places worthy of important rituals. The *Roden Crater* was the location for Panza's son Giovanni Panza di Biumo's wedding.³⁹⁸

Turrell's work may be seen as an experiential alternative to all organized religion.³⁹⁹ His goals, as he has often stated, are to create opportunities for viewers to experience the light inside as reflected in the light outside, as they form their own "experience of soul." In this context, Turrell's works can be considered a contemporary expression of a multi-faceted and open-ended Quaker practice, intended to bring the "cosmos closer."

³⁹⁶Susan Horsburgh, "The Light Fantastic, Sculptor James Turrell has conjured his unique art form out of near nothingness," *Time Magazine*, 154, No. 9 (30 August 1999), 44.

³⁹⁷Ibid.

³⁹⁸John Bowsher, Senior Administrator, Dia Center, interview with author, 11 July 2007.

³⁹⁹Although the Rothko Chapel may also be considered an alternative to all organized religion, Turrell's pieces are driven by an ecumenical Quaker philosophy.

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Appendix 1: Quaker Terminology:

Friend: Term used by George Fox to describe the people gathering seeking God through their own individual experiences of the light within.

Inward Light: Term used by Fox to describe his belief in the presence of God inside every human being.

Leading: Term used by Fox to describe a feeling of a drive or a call to speak about a certain matter during Meeting.

Meeting: Term used by George Fox to describe the group of people "meeting" in silence to experience the presence of God. Meeting for Worship is another common term.

Meeting for Business: Term used for monthly Meetings, which typically follows a Meeting for Worship. The Meeting for Business (or Business Meeting) usually starts out with a brief gathering in silence, then an elected Clerk conducts the Meeting. All agree to the minutes in consensus. A few may withstand, but acknowledge the differences and support the Meeting to move on to the next agenda item to the next despite their differences.

Meeting House: Place for worship.

Yearly Meeting: Organization for a number of local Meetings organized by regions or states.

Opening: Term used by Fox to describe how God would "speak" through him.

Quaker: initially negative term used in England to describe Friends who would sometime "tremble" or "shiver" during "opening." The term soon became common use and Friends adopted it as theirs.

The Religious Society of Friends: Also called Society of Friends, official name for the Quaker society.