

Zurich, 8 July 2024

Press Release

LIGHT IN PAPER. PRINTS BY JAMES TURRELL

21 August–10 November 2024

Opening: Tuesday, 20 August 2024, 6 p.m.

James Turrell is without doubt one of the most important artists of our time. Born in the United States in 1943, he is renowned for devising atmospheric light installations that not only create extraordinary sensory experiences, they also allow viewers to reflect on their own perceptions. Less well known to a wider public are the prints that he realised in collaboration with the renowned Zurich printer Peter Kneubühler. The upcoming exhibition at the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich presents this side of Turrell's work, with a particular focus on his fascinating ability to generate light within a two-dimensional surface. The exhibition events programme includes a two-day conference in November 2024, which will bring together participants from a wide range of disciplines. Their insights and findings will later be assembled in a conference publication.

Light has always preoccupied artists and it has long had a significant role as a compositional device. However, in the twentieth century light also became a motif in its own right – to radical effect in the work of the internationally acclaimed artist James Turrell, who creates installations from light and luminosity. One such work by Turrell will be inaugurated in autumn 2024 in the new home of Zurich's children's hospital (Kinderspital). In response to this significant event the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich is presenting a selection of its rich holdings of prints by Turrell.

Turrell first turned to print-making in 1984. Thanks to a suggestion from his publisher, Peter Blum, Turrell developed an ideal partnership with the renowned Zurich printer Peter Kneubühler. This was an extremely fortuitous meeting of minds. From the outset Turrell and Kneubühler (1944–1999) saw eye to eye, which led not only to a long-term collaboration but also to friendship. Between 1984 and 1991 Turrell regularly visited Switzerland to work on prints with Kneubühler. His choice of aquatint as his preferred technique here meant that he could dispense with the line as a stylistic feature, which perfectly suited his artistic approach. Aquatint allows the artist to create a variety of subtly nuanced planes – in Turrell's case generally in fine gradations of grey tones. In 2008 the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich became home to over 150 prints by Turrell. This body of work includes trial and final proofs and various states, all from the estate of the Peter Kneubühler Foundation. A number of these prints by Turrell came about in connection with other three-dimensional works of his. Some visibly refer to light installations that he has shown in various exhibitions. A typical example of these is the series **First Light** (1989–90), where the

title already indicates that light is the focus of the series. Others – such as the **Roden Crater** series from 1985, which is also on display in the exhibition – touch on aspects of Turrell's gigantic, ongoing Land Art project of the same name, which he commenced in the mid-1970s. However, while there are certain thematic affinities with other works, the aquatint prints are in fact autonomous works of art. Visitors to the exhibition will also discover a number of preparatory sketches by Turrell that show something of how he conceived his prints.

Turrell's work is of particular topical interest today because it interacts with a wide spectrum of disciplines, including natural sciences. There are points of contact with architecture, Land Art, astronomy, aviation and space exploration, physics, geosciences, medicine, perception psychology and mysticism. By taking these multi-perspectival connections into account, the exhibition presented by the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich casts a new, sometimes unexpected light on Turrell's work.

On 5 and 6 November this multi-disciplinary aspect of James Turrell's art will be explored in an international conference. How do geoscientists respond to his prints? How does Turrell deploy particular pictorial strategies and how do these relate to architecture and landscape design? In-depth papers from participating experts and scholars will later be published in a comprehensive volume of proceedings of the conference.

Useful Information

Curator	Dr. Linda Schädler, Head of the Graphische Sammlung ETH Zürich. Project Assistant and research: Adrian Hug
Events	The exhibition is accompanied by a special programme of events. For detailed information see https://gs.ethz.ch/agenda/
Conference	5–6 November 2024
Publication	The proceedings of the conference will be published in 2025 with support from the Doris und Thomas Amman Stiftung.
Opening times	Daily, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., with the exception of 9 September 2024 (closed from midday for Knabenschiessen) and 8 November 2024
Admission	Free
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