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## Media Release

### Spencer Museum of Art receives major donation of art by internationally renowned light artist James Turrell

**Lawrence, KS, May 15, 2014** – As the Spencer Museum’s celebrated exhibition “James Turrell: Gard Blue” draws to a close, the Museum is pleased to announce that collectors Mark and Lauren Booth have donated a significant work of art by internationally renowned light artist James Turrell. Mark Booth, an alumnus of the University of Kansas, and Lauren Booth, an artist, loaned “Gard Blue” as the centerpiece for the Spencer’s 9-month exhibition, and have announced their intent to donate the work, making it a part of the Spencer Museum’s permanent collection.

“The Spencer is the right home for ‘Gard Blue.’ We are thrilled for it to be at the university,” Mark Booth said.

Spencer Museum of Art Director Saralyn Reece Hardy, who led the initiative to show “Gard Blue,” said the gift reveals the Booths’ commitment to public education and the important role that art plays in the education of the whole person.

“This gift from Mark and Lauren Booth demonstrates their vision as collectors and their astounding generosity,” Hardy said. “Adding a Turrell work of this significance and power, from his early period of discovery, to our collection is transformative.”

“James Turrell’s ‘Gard Blue’ is an enthralling piece. We’ve been so pleased to have it on loan from the Booths, and it will make a wonderful addition to the Spencer’s permanent collection. Mark is a longtime supporter of the university, and a great connoisseur of

modern art, and I'd like to thank both him and Lauren for their generous gift," KU Chancellor Bernadette Gray-Little comments.

"Gard Blue," a cross projection created by Turrell in 1968, marks the crucial juncture when Turrell shifted the viewer's attention to perception and the phenomenon of pure light, which is his medium. Appearing in a large, box-like room constructed specifically for its display, "Gard Blue" is a projection of blue light in an enclosed space. The clarity of "Gard Blue's" seemingly material shape is held by a single, arresting color emanating from it. The work encourages sustained attention and demands sensory revelation.

"My work has no object, no image and no focus," Turrell has said. "With no object, no image and no focus, what are you looking at? You are looking at you looking. What is important to me is to create an experience of worldless thought."

For the past half century, Turrell, the pre-eminent light artist of our time, has worked directly with light and space to create artworks that engage viewers with the limits and wonder of human perception. Informed by his training in perceptual psychology and a childhood fascination with light, Turrell began experimenting with light as a medium in southern California in the mid-1960s and emerged as a leader of the West Coast's avant-garde Light and Space Movement. Today, Turrell remains on the cutting edge.

Hardy believes that, decades into his extraordinary art career, Turrell is light years ahead of his time.

"His astonishing perceptive power and imagination have created an art of the future," she said. "One that changes how we see, think and live."

The Spencer's exhibition, which opened in September 2013, built on the momentum of three simultaneous Turrell retrospectives at major U.S. museums—the Guggenheim Museum in New York, the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston—and provided local and regional art audiences with the rare opportunity to experience Turrell's art close to home.

"Gard Blue" will remain on view through August 3, 2014.

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## Quotations from recent reviews and articles on James Turrell:

*Light, the essential ingredient for sight, is Turrell's principal medium. Spiritual perception is his art's aim. The ancient metaphor of light as the engine of enlightenment is conjured in a modern way.*

### **The light through James Turrell's eyes, The Los Angeles Times, May 28, 2013**

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*But then the lights come on, and the most accurate word is probably 'magic.' That's what it feels like. The walls instantly vanish and you're standing there in the gloaming light, completely alone, with triangles and cubes floating around you, and the darkness just washing through you, and the empty room is gone. You've passed through the looking glass.*

### **Behind the Cover Story: Wil Hylton on James Turrell's Magic, The 6th Floor: Eavesdropping on the Times Magazine, nytimes.com, June 17, 2013**

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*Some artists disdain critics who rely on biography to explain their art. In Turrell's case, however, his personal history is woven through his work as tightly as a tapestry. His strict Quaker upbringing, Southern California roots, captivation with flight, and study of mathematics and perceptual psychology have all fueled his meditative, magical work. In his pieces, geometric shapes appear sculpted from light; precisely cut holes in the roof reveal the sky in a whole new way; computer-programmed LED displays create visual concerts. His aim has been not to make objects—a painting, a sculpture, or a photograph—but rather to challenge viewers to consider how we see. Many of the works seem equal parts basic science and intense mysticism: Turrell wants no less than to capture the way light looks when our eyes are closed, 'suffuse and lucid.'*

### **Incredible Lightness, Harper's Bazaar, May, 2013**

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