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Media Release

The Spencer Museum brings work by art world luminary James Turrell to Kansas

Lawrence, KS, August 13, 2013 — The Spencer Museum is pleased to announce its forthcoming exhibition [James Turrell: Gard Blue](#) beginning this September. Building 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—the Spencer Museum exhibition provides local and regional art audiences with the rare opportunity to experience Turrell's art close to home.

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. Saralyn Reece Hardy, Director of the Spencer Museum of Art and project lead for this exhibition, 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 says, "one that changes how we see, think and live."

Gard Blue, created 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. "My work has no object, no image and no focus," he says. "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."

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. In the Spencer's exhibition, 21st-century holograms by Turrell will surround *Gard Blue*, representing this important American artist's ideas, innovative methods, and unwavering vision as they continue to develop.

Saralyn Reece Hardy, who has led the Spencer's initiative to show *Gard Blue*, has followed Turrell's career from its early stages and is enthusiastic about the experience that awaits audiences from Kansas and beyond who will personally experience Turrell's work for the first time during this exhibition. "To share the work of James Turrell with students and the public is a life-long dream for me," she explains. "His work challenges everything, particularly assumptions about art and its possibilities."

Gard Blue, an essential work by James Turrell, comes to the Spencer as a loan from distinguished patrons and collectors Mark and Lauren Booth. Mark, a KU alumnus, and Lauren, an artist, continually extend their generosity to a broad range of programs at the Spencer Museum of Art, reflecting their deep commitment to contemporary art.

James Turrell: Gard Blue at the Spencer Museum of Art in Lawrence, Kansas, opens to the public on Sunday, September 15, 2013. The exhibition remains on view through Saturday, May 18, 2014. Extensive programming will take place throughout the exhibition; details can be found online at spencerart.ku.edu.

Quotations from recent reviews and articles:

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

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***

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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