



Roden Crater Project,
stone inside Sun and
Moon Space

MICHAEL GOVAN

INNER LIGHT

The Radical Reality of James Turrell

The theme of light has preoccupied artists for centuries. Leonardo da Vinci wrote volumes about the importance of light in rendering nature; Romantic artists described the sublime through light; and others, from Russian icon painters to modern artists, used abstract forms to account for a divine or inner light. No one, however, has so fully considered the “thing-ness” of light itself—as well as how the experience of light reflects the wondrous and complex nature of human perception—as James Turrell has over more than four decades. As the artist himself explains of his work, “Light is not so much something that reveals as it is itself the revelation.”

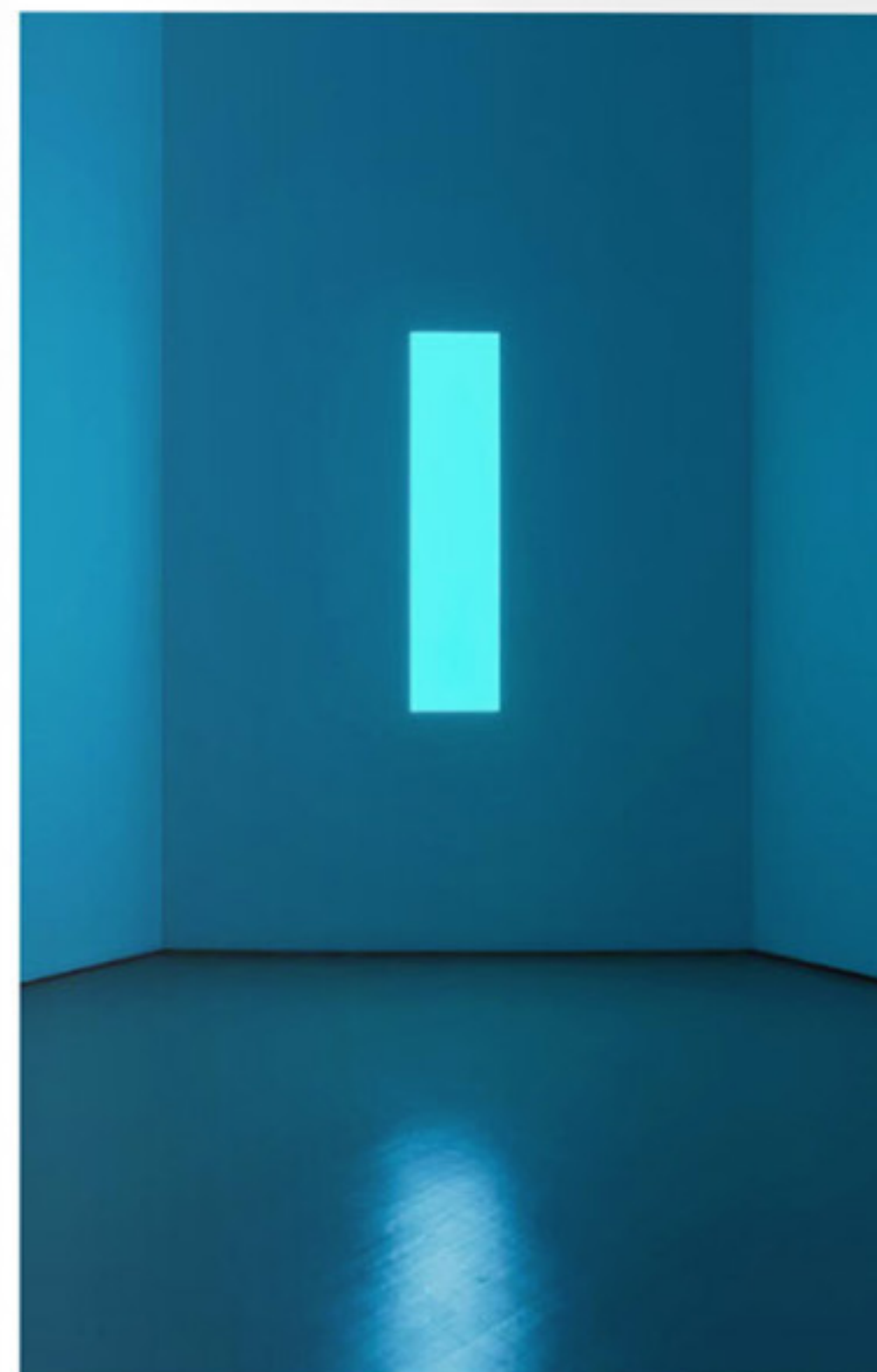
During the 1960s, Turrell emerged as one of the most radical of a new generation of artists. At a moment when American art in particular was dealing with extremely simplified forms (which were the beginnings of Minimalism), Turrell applied this approach to nothing—no object, only light and perception. His earliest light projections and constructions conjure a material perception of the immaterial, and in his (still unfinished) magnum opus, Roden Crater, Turrell goes beyond even that. One of the most ambitious artworks ever conceived, representing forty years of ongoing work to convert an extinct volcanic crater in northern Arizona, Roden Crater—through light—conveys the vastness of the cosmos within the tangible space of human experience.

JAMES TURRELL

Geometry of Light

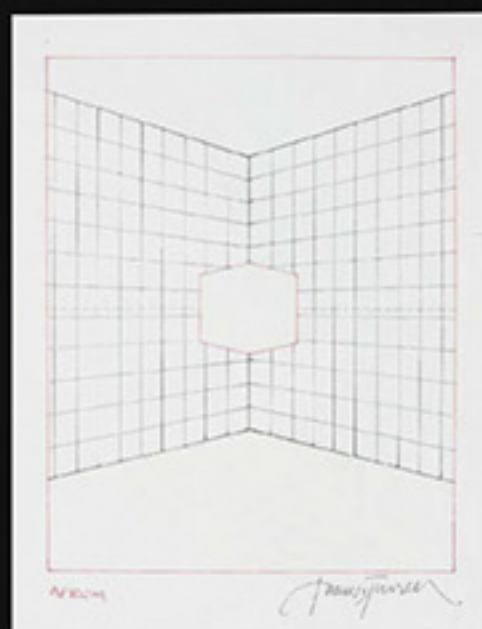


CHAPTER FOUR Blind Sight



Double Stack, 1970, Galeria OMR in collaboration with Häuser Contemporary, Munich.





Afrum from Projection
Piece Drawings, 1970-71

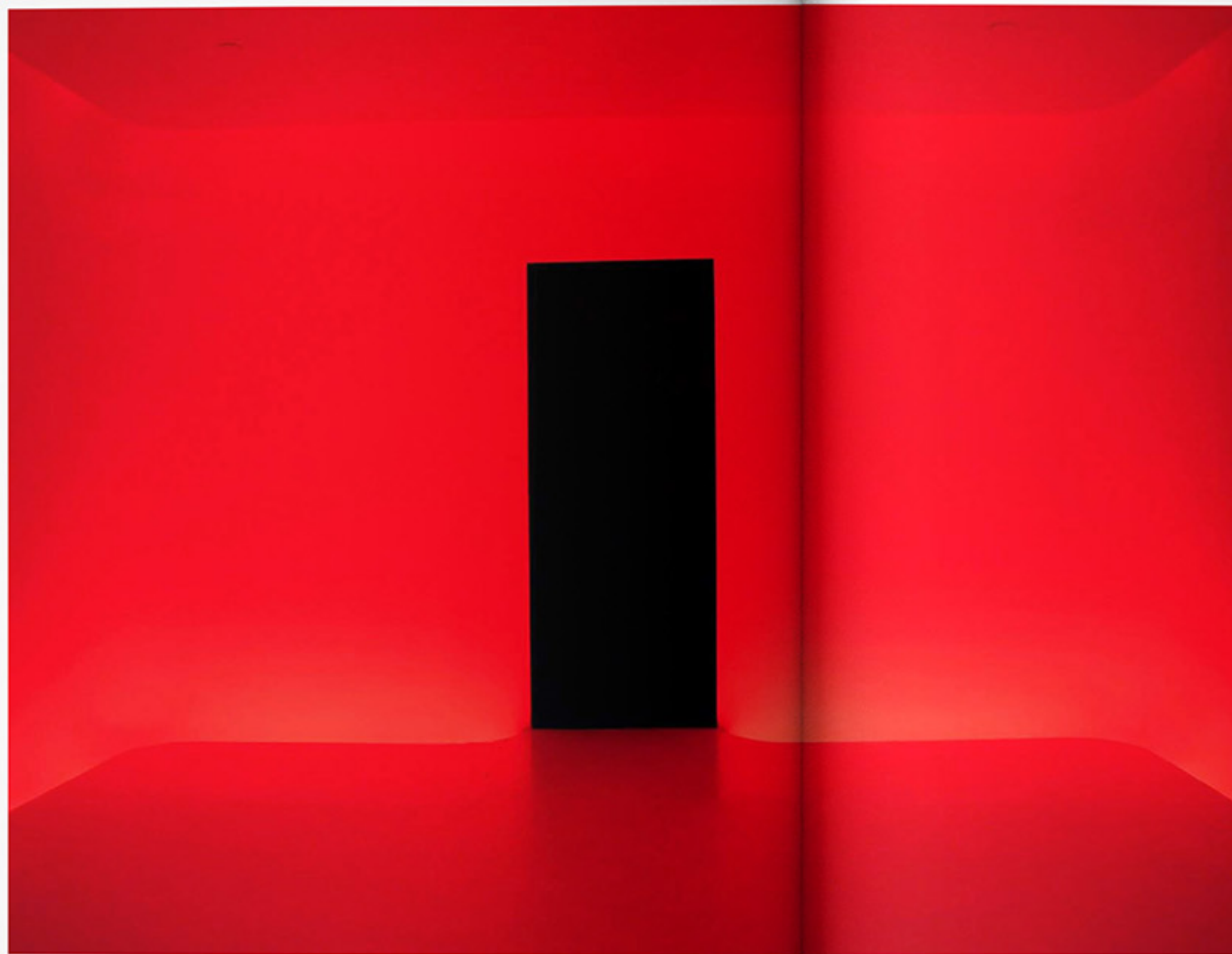
Afrum (White), 1966, installation view
from James Turrell: Light and Space,
Whitney Museum of American Art, New
York, October 22, 1980-January 1, 1981,
photograph by Warren Silverman.





TOP
Sight Unseen, 2013, FAI Villa e Collezione
Panza. Photograph by Simone Bossi.

LEFT
Breathing Light, 2013, Los Angeles
County Museum of Art. Photograph by
Florian Holzberg.



Big Red, 2002, Mattress Factory, Pittsburgh. Photo by Florian Holzherr.