

God's Mirrorball

After *James Turrell*, 1994 (Magasin III, with Drawing becoming a permanent installation) and *Skyspace* by James Turrell, 2011.

By Viktor Iraklis

Prologue

This year, I found myself searching for light — not just in the spaces I visited, but in the quiet, cracked places of my own life. It was the year the ground shifted. Plans dissolved before they could take form. What I had trusted, in work, in love, in myself, turned suddenly unstable, as if I'd been walking on thin ice without knowing. The rhythm I once moved to fell to its knees.

Somewhere in the midst of this, I entered CuratorLab in Stockholm. I thought I was simply moving forward, following an instinct I could barely name, even though I stood at the least creative moment of my life. Curation, to me, had always been linked to dark rooms, strobing lights, syncopated rhythms or the distinct identities built from labels, individuals, connections, networks. I stepped in over my head. And maybe now, as I reach the end, I find myself with even less to say and less to define. Maybe that is the point. Maybe that is what art is: that which refuses to be pinned down, that which expands the borders of definition.

All year I moved between Copenhagen, Berlin, Stockholm, spending too much time obsessing about what's next, losing control over my belongings, over time as a creator, over the structures I once thought would hold me. Deconstructing my relationship with what happens around me, with those I love, and falling again into the loop of obsessing over what to say. Death knocked on my door every day, and from somewhere deep inside, a line kept repeating: *You have to keep dancing, as long as the music plays*. I found myself in a kind of slow, experimental rehab, where the mind learns again how to focus. And that, I realized, is a Georgia O'Keeffe question — like trying to see a flower. It is so small, it takes time. I haven't time. And yet, to see it takes time, like to have a friend takes time. Quitting my addictions has been hard. Keeping up with old friendships, new friendships and with my relationship to what I create, even harder. But they are all one and the same.

I put on my curator's mantle, even in this cracked emotional state, to examine someone else's work. Or more accurately, to feel the work. Even trapped in my own mind's constitutive prison, I know this much: my beliefs, my sovereignty, still exist in the acceptance of human decay. I keep hoping that my acceptance will bring peace.

Who am I kidding? I take the position of the observer. Detached, protected.
Let's go back to basics. To look at peace, you have to look at violence. You have to look
At the acts, the numbers. The system is flawed and so I have to break the rules.

A Door Opens: Turrell

One afternoon, during a conversation with my professor Marti Manen, that thread pulled tighter. We talked about limitations of what is possible and what is not, especially within the frameworks we're given as curators, as artists, as people trying to make sense of chaos. He nudged me, almost playfully but with intent, toward a place I hadn't considered: a museum in Stockholm, long closed, more ghost now than institution. "It's closed," he said, "but maybe you can find a way in. Maybe that's where you start playing with the borders of possible and impossible."

And then, the works of James Turrell started to find me. Quietly at first, like light leaking through a crack in a dark room. I wasn't looking for them, not directly. But they appeared, invitations to stop, to stand still, to let the world's sharp edges soften in the glow. They arrived when I was least prepared, still tangled in my need to control, to predict, to define.

From my privileged position, white, safe, observing and I now discuss color.

Color Theory: A Survival Manual

"I've been 40 years discovering that the queen of all colors was black." — Pierre-Auguste Renoir.

Color has always been more than pigment. It is perception, negotiation, a trick of the eye and perhaps, a trick of the soul. Josef Albers wrote that color is the most relative medium in art, never seen as it truly is, always shifting according to what surrounds it. *"In visual perception,"* he said, *"a color is almost never seen as it really is, as it physically is."*

I think about this now, as I try to understand my own year of shifting grounds. Color theory feels less like an art school exercise and more like a survival manual. Nothing is fixed. Everything depends on context, on proximity, on contrast. My moods, my losses, even my search for peace, they change tone depending on what they are placed next to.

Turrell's works do not show color. The sacral chakra glows orange, they say the center of creativity, of pleasure, of fluidity. But mine has felt blocked for months, maybe longer. The orange that should vibrate with warmth has felt muted, clouded over by grief, by control, by the slow erosion of self-trust.

In Turrell's spaces, though, color is not decoration. It's confrontation. It demands that you stay. Here, orange is not playful; it is deep, dense, and alive. Blue is not calm; it stretches so far it becomes abyssal.

Albers taught that colors interact and their meaning arises only in relation, never alone. And so I begin to see myself, too, as relative. My pain is colored by privilege, my search for stillness colored by the violence I know exists, my desire to define colored by the impossibility of fixed meaning.

I return to the basics: to look at peace, I must look at violence. To see orange, I must feel blue. To find light, I must stand still long enough for my eyes to adjust to the dark. Color theory becomes life theory. Turrell's glow becomes a kind of therapy. And I, always the observer begins to dissolve into the field, to let go of the edges I have spent so long policing.

For this chapter it might presumptuous, but I will build an unauthentic guide of color, sound and (e)motion.

Color

The property possessed by an object of producing different sensations on the eye as a result of the way it reflects or emits light

Colors are not innocent. They are charged emotionally, politically, spiritually. I take my cues here from two sources: the chakra system, which locates color in the body's energetic centers, and Tom Sachs' pragmatic, coded color rules, where color signals use, meaning, and hierarchy in material practice.

Sound

Vibrations that travel through the air or another medium and can be heard when they reach a person's or animal's ear.

Sound is the carrier wave of feeling.

I assign each color a track, not as a strict equation, but as a mood, an atmosphere that resonates in the gut. A score for when words fail.

(E)motion

*(A strong feeling deriving from one's circumstances, mood, or relationships with others.)
Change of location or position of an object with respect to time.*

Emotion is motion. To feel is to move, sometimes inward, sometimes outward. Each color carries a motion, a physical impulse: contraction, expansion, flow, stillness.

In this guide, (e)motion is the bridge between sensing and acting.

RED

Color

Red is the base, the body's first language: survival, security, grounding. It is the color of blood, the pulse that keeps you here even when everything else falls apart. It is the friction, the rub of feet against ground when you have to remind yourself: *I exist. I am here.* Red demands action, it does not wait — Tom Sachs.

Sound

Track: *Huerco S. – A Sea Of Love*

(E)motion

Motion: Stomping, grounding, standing your ground. Feel the weight in your feet. Emotion: Fear, anger, but also fierce life. The refusal to disappear.

Instruction: Stand up. Press your feet into the floor. Breathe down. Activate. Claim your ground.

ORANGE

Color

Orange governs pleasure, creativity, flow. It is water, emotion, movement. It asks you: *Can you feel? Can you enjoy?*

When blocked, orange turns to stagnation. Numbness. The creative drought that haunted your year. But when unlocked, it ripples. It invites you back into sensation.

Sound

Track: *Leafar Legov – Never Ending Beginnings (B)*

(E)motion

Motion: Hips swaying, spine rolling, a return to fluidity. Emotion: Pleasure, sensuality, creative hunger or shame and guilt in its shadow.

Instruction: Let yourself move. In water, in dance, in tears. Loosen the grip. Flow.

YELLOW

Color

Yellow is the fire in your belly. Willpower, confidence, the right to act. It flares up when you claim your space and collapses when you shrink - the color that says: prepare to act.

Yellow is where anxiety lives, but also where empowerment is born. It is the embers beneath your ribcage that can glow again.

Sound

Track: *Grand River – Flies*

(E)motion

Motion: Standing tall, chest lifted, stomach engaged.

Emotion: Confidence, purpose, boundary-setting or shame and indecision in its shadow.

Instruction: Breathe deep into your belly. Claim your center. Radiate outward.

GREEN

Color

Green is balance, love, compassion. It bridges earth and sky, body and spirit. It asks you: *Can you open? Can you risk connection?*

Sachs calls green *information*, the green light says go, but green also hides in nature, camouflaging itself. In you, green flickers between wanting to reach out and fearing vulnerability.

Sound

Track: *Sa Pa – Ripsketch*

(E)motion

Motion: Chest expanding, arms opening, a gesture of embrace.

Emotion: Love, forgiveness, grief — the ache and the healing bound together.

Instruction: Breathe into your chest. Practice softening. Let yourself open, even when it hurts.

BLUE

Color

Blue is voice, truth, communication. It is not the loudest color but the clearest. It asks: *Can you speak? Can you be heard?* In you, blue is the struggle to name your feelings, to let your voice come through the cracks.

Sound

Track: *The Orb – God's Mirrorball*

(E)motion

Motion: Neck long, shoulders relaxed, jaw unclenched.

Emotion: Truth-telling, expression, but also fear of exposure.

Instruction: Speak. Write. Sing. Let sound move through you. Let words become survival.

INDIGO

Color

Indigo is intuition, inner sight, the vision that goes beyond the visible. It is the color that hovers at the edge of perception in Turrell's work, the blur that challenges you to trust what you feel even if you can't fully see. *Can you sit with uncertainty? Can you trust the unseen?*

Sound

Track: *Porter Ricks - Biokinetics 2*

(E)motion

Motion: Eyes softening, gaze turned inward. Stillness.

Emotion: Insight, intuition, but also confusion and doubt when

blocked. Instruction: Close your eyes. Breathe into the space between your brows. Wait. Trust what flickers.

In the end, choosing to visit Turrell's work is a selfish tour of existentialism. Maybe not original. Maybe even predictable. But grounding, grounding in its simplicity, in the act of standing still inside a color field and allowing the noise to fall away. It is not a grand collective curatorial gesture. It is not about global frameworks, about building discourse towers that reach upward until they collapse under their own weight. It is smaller. Quieter. More about fitting the well, stocking the pond, tending to the water before I ask it to reflect anything at all. Because before I can create, before I can provoke or gesture toward activism or change, I have to survive myself. I have to find that sliver of inner peace, not the peace that comes with resolution, but the peace that comes with acceptance.

Obrist writes that the curator's professional role coalesces around four key functions. First, preservation, thus safeguarding art as national heritage, the collectively told story of a culture. Second, the selection of new work. Third, contributing to art history, like a scholar adding chapters to an ongoing book. And fourth, arranging art on walls and in galleries, the act of making exhibitions. This paper achieves none of the above. I can say that with certainty.

And yet, maybe someone who has spent time inside Turrell's light will tell you something else. That beyond the frameworks and the roles, there is another kind of work: the Gesamtkunstwerk formed not on walls but in perception itself. Decades of Turrell's practice with light and color have distilled into spaces where the cosmos meets the fragile eye of the human being. Where images aren't hung but culled from the inner chambers of what it means to feel, to be, to dissolve.

Dialogue: Trains, Light, and Slow Arrivals

Chapel Dorotheenstädtischer Friedhof:

You: A quick survey. Trains or planes?

Sophie: Trains. Always trains. Planes rupture time. Trains stretch it.

You: Stretching is good. I need more stretch. Planes feel like teleportation with a panic attack attached.

Sophie: Trains are permission. To arrive slowly. To not arrive at all, maybe. Berlin let me arrive slowly.

You: Berlin arrived too fast for me. Like, one day I'm here, and the next I'm already leaving. You ever feel that? Like the city is temporary even when you live in it?

Sophie: That's every place. That's every ritual. Even this, sitting with Turrell's light for an hour, it's temporary. But you carry the glow after.

You: Glow as residue?

Sophie: Glow as proof.

You: Proof of what?

Sophie: That we stood still. That you let time stretch. That you didn't flinch when the color swallowed you.

You: I did flinch though. Inside. Like — when the light shifted from blue to that weird blood-orange, my chest tightened.

Sophie: That's the ritual. Color is a test. Planes avoid the test. Trains make you sit with it. Turrell forces you to sit with it.

You: So we're back to trains.

Sophie: We're always back to trains. Even this cemetery, it's a station. Arrival, departure, pause. You notice how the air here feels paused?

You: It's dead air. Heavy. But also thin, like it might break.

Sophie: You planning to stay here?

You: Where? In the city? In the light? In the pause?

Sophie: All of it.

You: I don't know. Feels like I'm stocking the pond, but I never learned to fish.

Sophie: Maybe you're not supposed to fish. Maybe you're just supposed to watch the water ripple.

You: That's not very activist of me.

Sophie: Neither is sitting in colored light for an hour. But look at you breathing. Feeling. Not playing the game today.

You: Small rebellion.

Sophie: The best kind.

You: Sophie?

Sophie: Yeah?

You: If I choose the train, does that mean I'm choosing to stay in-between?

Sophie: Maybe it means you're choosing to arrive slower. And maybe, just maybe, that's the only way to arrive at all.

You: And the light?

Sophie: The light will wait. The light doesn't care if you flinch.

Aftershock:

Paula: You can't change your machine with mood lighting.

You: Ouch. Fair. But you're here too. Sitting in this aftershock.

Paula: I am. And that's the contradiction. I believe humans can change. But I also believe we're slow to do it. Like light filtering through layers, atmosphere, pollution, glass. By the time it reaches us, it's already transformed. Damaged, even.

You: So you're saying transformation is inevitable, but never pure.

Paula: Exactly. And that's what I wish Turrell would own more explicitly. That his light

isn't divine — it's compromised. Human. Flawed like us.

You: But maybe that's why it matters. Because in its compromise, it mirrors us. Brightness filtered through failure. And still it glows.

Paula: I'll give you that. And maybe that's where change starts. Not in pretending we can return to some pure origin, but in accepting the messiness of where we are now. Brightness and darkness tangled.

You: So humans can change. But only if we admit we're already changed. Already compromised.

Paula: Yes. Change is not arrival. It's acknowledgment. The aftershock, not the blast.

You: And this light?

Paula: Maybe that's enough to make the point.

Outside Inside Skyspace:

Hugo: Yeah, it's like that track by Grand River, "Flies", it moves so slowly, but there's this subtle evolution happening beneath the surface, almost imperceptible. The bassline, the atmosphere—it's all shifting around you, but you don't realize how much it's shifting until it's already shifted, and you're somewhere completely different. It's like Turrell's colors, how they subtly change and shift until you can't pinpoint where you were before, but you know you're somewhere new.

Me: It's not linear, it's cyclical. You're not moving forward; you're just existing in a loop, suspended in time.

Hugo: Exactly. And when you think about how each of these artists' works whether it's through sound or light, it's about creating a space for you to feel *something* different, something beyond the ordinary. No narrative, no message, the moment. And when you're inside that moment. I get this when I listen to dub, Basic Channel, Porter Ricks, You're not trying to make sense of. Remember when in Leipzig at the Giegling Party?

Me: You didn't notice it at first, but gradually, we were being pulled deeper and deeper, not sure where you end and the space begins. You're inside the track, but you're outside it, too. You're aware, but also unaware.

Hugo: You're not just consuming it, you're creating it in the way you experience it. Every single part of it is tied to your perception, to the way you're shifting, moving, evolving with it. The acid didn't just open up our minds, it opened up the world around us, and the world inside us.

Me: Is it your favorite event we've been together?

Hugo: Sideways, yes. And there's something beautiful in that sideways slip. Like a refusal to move forward to progress in that capitalist, linear way. Dub taught us that first, right? That you can strip away, echo back, loop, and in that loop there's freedom. Freedom from the march of time. Creating sanctuaries in repetition, but not the dead repetition—repetition with difference. That's why every shift feels like a revelation.

Me: Yeah, every return is a little bit off, a little bit new. And that's the dream logic of it, isn't it? Like in dreams you keep ending up in the same place, but it's never quite the same.

Hugo: Allowing yourself to dissolve a little. I think about The Orb "God's Mirrorball".

Me: Breathing system, yeah. I feel like a Human Taxi.

Hugo: How much of your life has happened inside of a car, a train, a plane?

Searching for Light: A Curatorial Reflection

So maybe this is not an essay. Maybe this is not even a guide, it is just a record, like a techno track. It's not about structure, perfection, or closure. It's about doing it. About repetition that changes each time. About questions that never get answered. I do not know what art does, and maybe that is the question I am trying to answer openly. How we look is how we feel, it's how we move. When we study that, we save the earth, Jafa says.

I think I have been looking for that, not solutions, not a fix, but a practice. A way of staying with the trouble, as Haraway would call it. A way of holding the glow and the crack at once. Turrell's light works didn't give me answers, but they did stretch time wide enough that I could sit inside the fracture. They made me notice that light leaks through, even when things fall apart. Maybe especially then.

The slowness matters. The refusal to speed up, to produce, to explain. It's like taking the train instead of the plane, not to be pure, not to be perfect, but to feel the ground under the movement. To understand that how we move changes what we see, and what we see changes who we become. This is not about progress. It is about staying. About sitting still long enough to feel the colors shift on your skin. About letting the blue turn orange, the silence become sound, the observer dissolve into the field.

Light, after all, is not arrival. Light is interruption. It is aftershock. It is compromised, flawed, filtered through atmosphere, through history, through me. Like Paula said, it is never pure. It's always cracked, always already broken open. And maybe that's the point. Maybe the glow is in the leakage.

So, this is my quiet gesture. My cracked essay. A record, a track, a stocking of the pond.

Maybe the work is not to close the question, but to keep asking it, with my eyes, with my body, with my slowness. To stay long enough in the room as the colors shift. To practice seeing as a form of feeling. To let that practice leak out into the world, flawed and glowing.