

Press Release
7 November 2024

Copenhagen
Contemporary



Aftershock, 2021 © James Turrell, Installation view at Copenhagen Contemporary, 2024. Photo: David Stjernholm.

Copenhagen Contemporary purchases popular light installation by James Turrell

The world-famous light artist's major immersive work *Aftershock* to be the first work in CC's collection of twenty-first-century art. An enormous space of coloured light envelops your body and creates a sense of floating in a boundless space. One of the most popular works of art in the country now to be installed permanently at the art centre Copenhagen Contemporary – thanks to an extremely generous donation from the foundation Augustinus Fonden.

James Turrell's installation *Aftershock* strikingly transforms the gallery space into a wholly different world consisting of primary sensory impressions generating a strong physical and visual impact. Being one of the country's most cherished installations in years past, *Aftershock* will now have a permanent home at CC. The spectacular work was originally created specifically for CC in connection with a major light art exhibition held in 2021. Once the exhibition closed, CC has extended loan periods of the work time and again. It seems tailor-made to CC and the audience has embraced it to such an extent that a large group of people is always seen queueing to sample the unique aesthetically pleasing and physical experience the work has to offer. Before Christmas, James Turrell agreed that the work could remain at CC for good – and we have now succeeded in purchasing the work thanks to an extraordinarily generous donation of DKK 6.4 million from the Augustinus Fonden.

Marie Laurberg, director at CC, is 'over the moon' that Turrell's fantastic work is now a permanent fixture at CC. She says:

"It's a gift very much in a class of its own and a purchase of national significance. The work has been shown at CC for several years now, and I have simply been unable to dismantle it. Personally, I'm very fond of Turrell's works because they embody a special kind of poetry. He paints with light in three dimensions, which is why his works address our emotions so powerfully. Being able to successfully secure the work for CC is a wonderful gift, indeed."

Frank Rechendorff Møller, director of Augustinus Fonden, says:

"It gives us great pleasure to contribute to the high artistic pitch at CC – an art institution of international format encased in a raw exterior on Refshaleøen. With the purchase of James Turrell's work, CC has now made sure that the audience can experience a work that has already proved its huge appeal and power to fascinate for a long time to come."

First work in CC's collection

Turrell's work is the first time a permanent work has been purchased for CC, which opened on the isle of Refshaleøen in Copenhagen in 2018 and houses temporary exhibitions of international contemporary art. This work introduces a new collection of twenty-first-century art at CC.

Marie Laurberg, director at CC, says:

"Purchasing *Aftershock* sees the start of an exciting new chapter at CC. It's the first step in a process where CC, over the coming years, will purchase a few specially selected major works by leading contemporary artists, so that, in addition to the temporary exhibitions, there will be works that the audience will develop an in-depth and long-lasting relationship with."

About the work

Aftershock is a total installation created specifically for CC by the American light artist James Turrell. By exposing human eyes to an intense flow of colour, the brain will start to hallucinate whilst attempting to create meaning in a boundless space of colour. This is a major work in Turrell's oeuvre and the only one using stroboscopic light.

In *Aftershock*, we experience a disorientating effect, where space boundaries are blurred, and we begin to wonder whether our eyes are open or closed. In Turrell's own words, "My works are not about light, they are light.."

Turrell describes his works as containers for light where light and colour are experienced as physical materials. In a broader sense, his practice is about light as both a physical and metaphorical presence determining human perception and therefore also how we experience the world.

About James Turrell

James Turrell (b.1943) is a giant of international contemporary art and one of the most acclaimed contemporary artists alive. He is part of art history and has been a powerful source of inspiration for later generations, including Olafur Eliasson. Since the 1960s, his ground-breaking artistic experiments have taken the world by storm. Light, space and human perception are key themes in his practice.

With a Quaker background – a pacifist and Christian community who believes in the 'inner light' – Turrell began experimenting with light as an art medium in the mid-1960s. Through his studies of perceptual psychology, Turrell became interested in the theory of perception, exploring how space, light, and colour affect humans.

For more information about the work:

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Copenhagen Contemporary is in 2024 supported by:

Aage og Johanne Louis-Hansens Fond, Augustinusfonden, Knud Højgaards Fond, Beckett-Fonden, Bikubenfonden, Det Obelske Familiefond, A.P. Møller og Hustru Chastine Mc-Kinney Møllers Fond til almene Formaal, 15. Juni Fonden, Kulturministeriet, Københavns Kommune, Statens Kunstfond, William Demant Fonden, Konsul George Jorck og Hustru Emma Jorck's Fond, Solar Fonden af 1978, Arne V. Schleschs Fond, Dansk Tennis Fond, Foreningen Roskilde Festival, Refshaleøens Ejendomsselskab, Fredericia Furniture, Mads Nørgaard Copenhagen, Dinesen, Le-fix, Nordic Rentals, MTAB og +Halle