

Ollman, Leah. "Taking part in Turrell's deeply immersive vision." Los Angeles Times. 21 June 2013. Web.

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## Review: Perceptual Cell a consummate Turrell experience

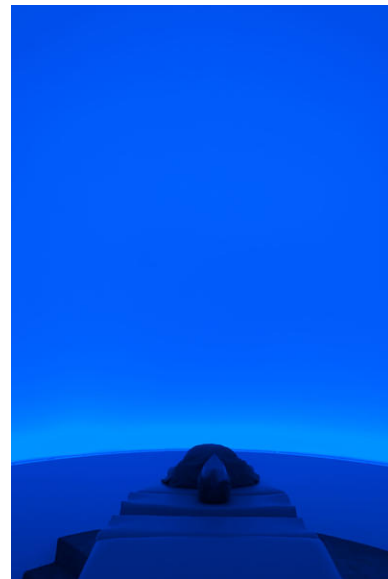
"Sooner Than Later, Roden Crater," the show filling Kayne Griffin Corcoran's handsome new space, is largely a cerebral affair, centered on James Turrell's 40-years-and-counting project to transform an extinct volcano in Arizona into a celestial observatory of sorts. His vision is diagrammed, described and accounted for through photographs, drawings, models, surveying tools and architectural plans, leaving, by necessity, the project's promised experiential effects to the imagination. The show (guest-curated by Richard Andrews of the Skystone Foundation) abounds in useful information and complements well the current Turrell retrospective at LACMA.

All well and good, and important for art historical understanding. But Turrell's work has always been more about sensing than knowing, perceiving rather than amassing and assessing data.

For a consummate Turrell experience, head to the back of the gallery, where he has installed "Meditation Room," the latest iteration in his series of Perceptual Cells. The domed room-within-a-room (15' high, 16'8" in diameter) accommodates two visitors at a time, on raised, padded platforms akin to medical examination tables. This is, indeed, a laboratory, a site of experimentation. Each occupant is a specimen, but there are no outside observers. Participants monitor their own internal and external stats. Surrendered to the experience, they--ideally--become instruments of pure perception.

Once sealed within, lying down, and encompassed by the dome, visitors choose between two light-and-sound programs: "Soft" lasts 16 minutes, and "Hard" lasts 19. In both, colored lights around the rim of the dome (just visible in peripheral vision and the only real demarcation of space, the barest suggestion of a frame) shift in hue and intensity, blending and pulsing to the accompaniment of a fluttering, stuttering beat.

Gold dissolves to white. Emerald blinks violet. Pinpricks of light perforate the field. Striations paint it. It soon becomes impossible to distinguish between what's happening in the space, in the



"Meditation Room" by James Turrell at Kayne Griffin Corcoran

eye and in the mind. As in Turrell's immersive environments, the Ganzfelds, the atmosphere takes on an unexpected viscosity, a fine, foggy grain.

The "Hard" sequence, with its saturate colors and throbbing strobe, delivers a gorgeous assault, exquisite even when on the brink of unbearable. It follows with sublime moments of reprieve--pink soak, lilac bath, milky cloak, aqua wash.

Turrell has been developing sensory isolation chambers of various kinds since the late 1960s. Some were called "Telephone Booths," for their promise of transformation, a la Clark Kent. In spite of their staginess and fixed conditions of duration and position, all urge an inwardness, a kind of aesthetic self-reliance or self-discovery. The propulsive beat that accompanies these programs detracts in this regard, force-feeding responses the way a heavy-handed film score announces the mood. Silence would be more welcome, more conducive to attending to one's own internal rhythm during these phenomenal experiences.

Kayne Griffin Corcoran, 1201 S. La Brea Ave., (310) 586-6886, through July 20. "Meditation Room" remains on view through the fall; advanced reservations required. Closed Sunday and Monday. [www.kaynegriffincorcoran.com](http://www.kaynegriffincorcoran.com)