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# National College of Art and Design

Craft design - Ceramics

## The Gardens of Light

*A study of the work of Heather Ackroyd,  
Daniel Harvey , and James Turrell  
and its relation to the past*

by

*Sinead Nic Fhlanncha*

*Submitted to the Faculty of History of Art and  
Design and Complementary Studies in Candidacy  
for the Degree of Bachelor of Design.*

**1994**



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Design

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# The Gardens of Light

A study of the work of Heather Ackroyd,  
Daniel Harvey, and James Turrell  
and its relation to the past

by

Michael A. Thompson

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the Degree of Bachelor of Design  
in the Department of Design

1994

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## Introduction

" The first men by all traditional accounts lived in perfect harmony with nature and the Gods (1)

" ' The whites always want something they are always uneasy and restless .We think that they are mad .'

I asked him why he thought the whites were all mad.

' They say that they think with their heads',he replied.

' Why of course. What do you think with?', I asked him in surprise.

' We think here ', he said, indicating his heart." (2)

This quotation is taken from a passage in C.G.Jungs book Memories, Dreams and Reflections.(1920). In it, Jung relates the incident of a conversation he held with a Pueblo Indian , Ochwiay Biano (Mountain Lake) on a trip to New Mexico in the 1920's. The Pueblo Indians can be regarded as a race of people who remained untainted by the materialistic beliefs of modern man. It is very apparent from the above quote what today's generation of man has lost. Man has lost his ability to feel and perceive. He cannot observe the earth around him without looking for material gain. In an era where science has prevailed , the rapid urban expansion of our cities and the population boom has left man desperately lacking. His affinity which he once had with the earth is lost to all but a few. His conscious disruption of the rhythms of the earth has upset the delicate balance and phases such as global destruction, ozone layer and the green house effect have become common in our everyday vocabulary. Man's surrounding environment continues to fascinate him but he has lost what his predecessors had - harmony with his environment. Early man lived by the movements of the earth and a reverence of the earth spirit.

"The earth gave all things spontaneously and men were content with its uncultivated produce" (3)

Nature has traditionally been the ultimate inspiration for the artist who, depending on his orientation, seeks to imitate it, improve it or interpret it. Subconsciously or indeed consciously , our image of nature has been very much influenced by successive generations of artists from the Romantics, the Impressionists to the present 'eco-aware' artist. This influence has tended to produce, on the whole, a very idealistic and utopian view of nature.

## Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the use of social media and the spread of misinformation. The study is based on a survey of 1,000 participants who were asked to provide information about their social media usage and their beliefs about the accuracy of information found on these platforms. The results of the study will be discussed in the following sections.

The study was conducted in a cross-sectional design, with data collected from a single point in time. The participants were recruited through a combination of online and offline methods, including social media advertisements, email lists, and community centers. The survey instrument was designed to measure several variables, including the frequency of social media use, the types of platforms used, the sources of information, and the perceived reliability of the information. The data were analyzed using descriptive statistics and regression analysis to identify factors associated with the use of social media and the spread of misinformation. The findings of the study suggest that there is a positive relationship between the use of social media and the spread of misinformation, with several factors contributing to this relationship. These factors include the ease of sharing information on social media, the lack of editorial oversight, and the influence of social norms. The study also found that individuals who use social media more frequently are more likely to believe in the accuracy of information found on these platforms. These findings have important implications for the development of strategies to reduce the spread of misinformation on social media.

The study was limited by several factors, including the cross-sectional design, which does not allow for the establishment of causality. Additionally, the study was limited by the self-reported nature of the data, which may be subject to bias. Despite these limitations, the study provides valuable insights into the relationship between social media use and the spread of misinformation. The findings suggest that there is a need for further research in this area, as well as the development of strategies to reduce the spread of misinformation on social media.



"Artists can help us to balance the stresses of our real lives by creating mythic realms that may console us" (4)

This consolation does little to spark an awareness of the physical damage man is inflicting on his environment. The medium of Art can become the catalyst to inspire man's imaginative powers and moral intelligence and help him find his forgotten affinity with the earth.

The landscaped garden became an area where man and nature actively became involved. The garden was no longer considered primarily for its function as a provider of the earth's produce, but began to be used for its aesthetic qualities. The designer became involved in the elements of space, line, textures, colours and scent. In the last thirty to forty years, a new generation of artists has started using the elements of the garden as a canvas. No longer satisfied with reproducing images of the world around him, the artist has moved into the spectrum of his surrounding environment. He uses the natural materials that the earth yields and exploits them to create works of art that are visually stimulating, thought-provoking and often carry underlying messages of ecological consciousness.

Light is an important factor when considering any aspect from life. It is essential to life, as it nourishes, can give warmth, and has the ability to affect the human psyche. One only has to look at the prison system to realise how light can affect man's reasoning. Solitary confinement with total light deprivation is one of the harshest punishments inflicted on an inmate. Light works on a very fundamental level. A new born baby can discern light through its quality and its texture as it tries to focus on images. It is no small wonder that early man worshipped and made gods out of the elements in the skies, namely the sun, the moon, and the stars. This ability to observe and perceive the light around us has become so dulled in this age of technology that man has become selective in what he chooses to see. Perhaps if man could really look at the confusion around him he could begin to realise that we are losing our world and our heritage and begin to put it in order.





" It has been the nature of our age to place the word above the picture, the prose above the poetry, the problem above the tragedy, the search for truth by the methods of science above the search for truth by the intuitive methods of the artist." (5)

It is evident that man has lost something precious, his way of perceiving has been lost through the generations,

" Vision in my view, is as much the cause of the greatest benefit to us, inasmuch as none of the accounts now given concerning the Universe would ever have been given if men had not seen the stars or the sun or the heavens." (6)

Early man first responded to the wonder of the heavens by venerating it. In pre-history Ireland the sun, moon and stars were worshipped. In her book Ancient Legends, Mystic charms and superstitions of Ireland, (7)Lady Wilde, describes the Four festivals the Irish held. These great pagan festivals were held in February, May, Midsummer and November. May boasted of the biggest feast, when the Druids lit the *Baal-Tine*, the fire of Baal the great Sun-God. November was the feast of Samhain, the celebration of the moon. All these festivals centred around the hill of Tara, in the Boyne valley. Since this book has been written, the surrounding area around Tara, has yielded the discovery of the richest source of passage graves in Ireland, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth to name but three. These graves although primarily considered as burial chambers, were also used as observatories of the movements of the sun and moon. The alignments of the graves were centred on the solstices, and the equinoxes, which in turn coincided with the pagan festivals. The graves were highly sophisticated calendars for their time.

The affinity the early Irish had with the heavens is now lost. For the average city dweller, the images portrayed on television or experienced on holiday constitute his experience of his environment. There are still a number of people living off the land and to some extent the sea, but these are in the ever increasing minority. In the west of Ireland, whole villages are dying out as people migrate to the cities, because of this rural traditions, folklore and its native language are dying out.





Man needs to rediscover a tranquillity and a relationship with the earth that is now sadly lost to him. Heather Ackroyd and Daniel Harvey, and James Turrell are three artists who have worked in Ireland with elements of light and the earth. They are trying to unite an age of technology with an age of perception.

Ackroyd and Harvey are two British artists I had an opportunity to work with during the Galway Arts Festival, in the summer of 1993. Their work covers a lot of different areas, from installation to performance, from film to fashion. I shall be primarily concerned with their installation work. Working with grass and light as mediums of expression, they create wonderful and very beautiful pieces of sculpture. I shall be using their project Forcefield (1993) as a focus.

James Turrell is an American born artist, who became a very important name in the early Earthworks and the Land-art of the 1970's. Working extensively with the experience of light, he has two major Earthworks in progress, The Roden crater project, in Flagstaff, Arizona and The Irish Sky Garden in Skibbereen, Co. Cork. Although the Sky Garden is not open to the general public until June/July 1994, I had the occasion to visit it in January of this year.

None of these artists are Irish, but they each have stated that they feel the response to their work has been uniquely Irish. The Irish have responded in a deeply spiritual way to their work, which they feel has its roots in their past.

These artists work with exterior and interior space but have used nature as their inspiration. Nature in its raw untamed space has been referred to as art, but I do not agree with this. For something to be called art, I believe it must have been the product of human involvement or activity. A beautiful sunset may invoke feelings similar to that of works of art, but there has been no human interaction with the making of the sunset, so it cannot be classified as 'art'.

Gardens of Light is an exploration of the work of Harvey, Ackroyd and Turrell. Their art is more than something just to look at and enjoy. It involves the viewer, takes him on a journey through their vision. It is not





an attempt to preach at the viewer or an effort to cure the world of its ills, but it does endeavour to encourage the viewer to perceive, to look and to touch. It attempts to bring man closer to the spirit of the earth and involve him with his past.

"The artist is one of the few members of our present society capable of making the link between art and life, between man and man, and between man and environment, which provided the vital source of all the great art of the past."(8)

By using the idea of a garden in their different spaces of interior and exterior, Harvey, Ackroyd and Turrell are using an image that everyone can relate to. They use spaces that have a history connected to them , from disused buildings to ancient monuments. I shall discuss how each artist has evolved his or her ideas and how they relate to the earth in its history and its forgotten secrets.







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## Chapter one ; Heather Ackroyd and Daniel Harvey

### The Early years

"For all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth and the flower thereof falleth away, but the word of God endures forever." (1)

The work of Harvey and Ackroyd is a delight of visual and sensual experiences. In a relatively short period, of just over a decade, they have developed a range of techniques and stunning effects with the medium of grass. They both have been working with grass and other natural materials, since the early 80's, but they did not meet until 1990 when they first started working collaboratively.

Heather Ackroyd graduated from the Crewe and Alsager College in 1980 with a degree in sculpture. Her first grass pieces included grass deck chairs and a stepped grass embankment. The vibrant colour and the animation of the living grass left a lasting impression on her, but her interest lay dormant as she pursued a career in performance art. She worked extensively in the foreground of new British theatre in London, as a member of the Impact Theatre from 1983 to 1985, and Lumiere and Son from 1986 to 1987. In 1988 she worked on Different Ghosts with Gary Stevens. It was not until 1989 in Uses of Enchantment that Ackroyd found a situation where she could synthesise all the different elements of her work. She transformed a Victorian garden square at the I.C.A. London National Garden Festival, Gateshead. The square that was enclosed by railings was transformed into a lush living carpet of grass. Outside the square she invoked a feeling of the desert in the form of a winged serpent from Persian mythology. During the festival, the serpent faded from a rich green to a burnt gold as the grass withered and died. Elements of myth, fairy tale, and her interest in the past, future, dead and living were all woven into this piece. She still continues to work in performance theatre with Graeme Miller in London, notably in A Girl Skipping (1990) and The Desire Paths (1993 ).





Daniel Harvey graduated from the Cardiff College of Art in 1981 with a degree in fine Art and received his Masters from the Royal College of Art, London in 1986. He first started using grass in his book sculptures. (Plate1). In The Living Word (1987) he used an old, degrading, antique Bible open at the parable of the sowing of the seed. The degradation of the book was accelerated by the grass growing through it. He also worked with slate, mushrooms and various fungi, and incorporated these elements to create visions of fantasy, reality and a mix of primitive life. By chance he discovered that germinating grass seed bonds together and will take a cast of a form. This gave Harvey the idea to cast figures. After a period of illness in 1988, he used this technique to cast his face in a piece entitled Life and Death Mask. The vegetative element of the grass and the roots tracking over the surface gave a lifelike quality to the mask. The grass grows through the mask giving it life and then eventually dies.

"It's another form of life. It's living although it's not humanoid. It's a changeling." (2)

In the piece Growing Together(1988), two figures were placed face to face and watered daily. Gradually the two figures intertwined as the grass's roots and blades crossed the space between them.

"The living grass figure is living in a different mode not simply a mark of the absence of the model but a new kind of presence, a new organism." (3)

Harvey has been extensively involved in set design and has worked with two of Britain's leading film makers ,Peter Greenaway and Derek Jarman. He was involved with the set design for Drowning with Numbers(1988), The Cook, the Thief, his Wife and her Lover(1989)and Prospero's Books (1990) all Greenaway films and War Requiem (1988) by Jarman. His set designs were principally involved with creating grass books, living fungi (Plate 2) and environments like Caliban's Pit from Prospero's Books.

In a sense Ackroyd had been growing towards Harvey and Harvey towards Ackroyd, for over ten years, and they finally met in 1990.

"..when they met, there seemed to be no spaces between them, only points of overlap and attraction." (4)









Plate 1 : Harvey, Daniel : Book Sculpture, London, (1986)

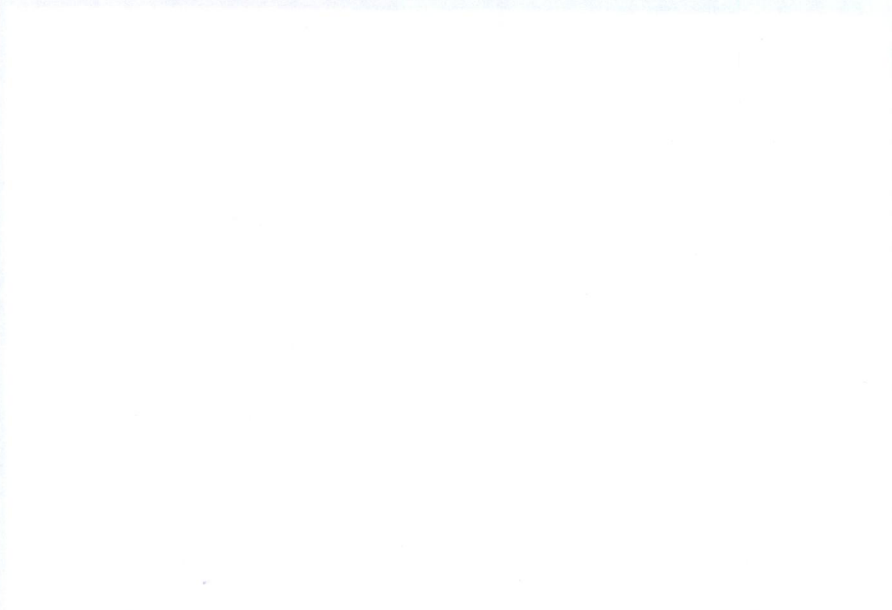






Plate 2 : Harvey, Daniel : Prospero's Books, London, (1990)







### *The first collaborations, 1990-1992.*

Harvey's and Ackroyd's first collaboration was L'Altro Lato [On the Other Side](1990) which was an installation in a vaulted room in an Italian village, Bussana Vecchia, Italy.(Plate 3).The walls were clad in clay into which germinating seeds of grass were pressed. A cast figure sat on a chair and a ladder was placed against the wall of grass in the corner. A circle of canvas was planted with grass seed which became a grass skirt that Heather wore in a performance in the room. Her body was caked with clay and she spun around.(Plate 4). There was very little natural light but a strong artificial source. When they moved the ladder out of the room after the exhibition, they noticed that the shadow cast onto the grass wall had left its imprint in yellow. Where the grass was deprived of light, it could not produce chlorophyll and therefore did not photosynthesise. After a few hours the ghostly imprint faded and the grass retained its true colour. This discovery started a period of experimentation in their work. In September 1990, they developed the idea of a grass 'fur' coat (Plate 5), for the Lynx anti-fur fashion show, in London, by using techniques of light deprivation.

The Grass house(1991)was a Time-based Arts project situated in a quiet street in Hull, an isolated city in Northern England. (Plate 6). This second major collaboration showed the ability of these artists to adapt to environments and how they had begun to relate to the culture and historical traditions of the buildings they worked in. Bringing art to the ordinary people is very important in the work of Daniel Harvey and Heather Ackroyd. Working mostly from derelict buildings, they pick sites that have easy public access and encourage people to come in and partake of a unique experience of nature, taking the exterior aspects of the garden into the interior space of a building. The house they chose in Hull had been empty for some time.

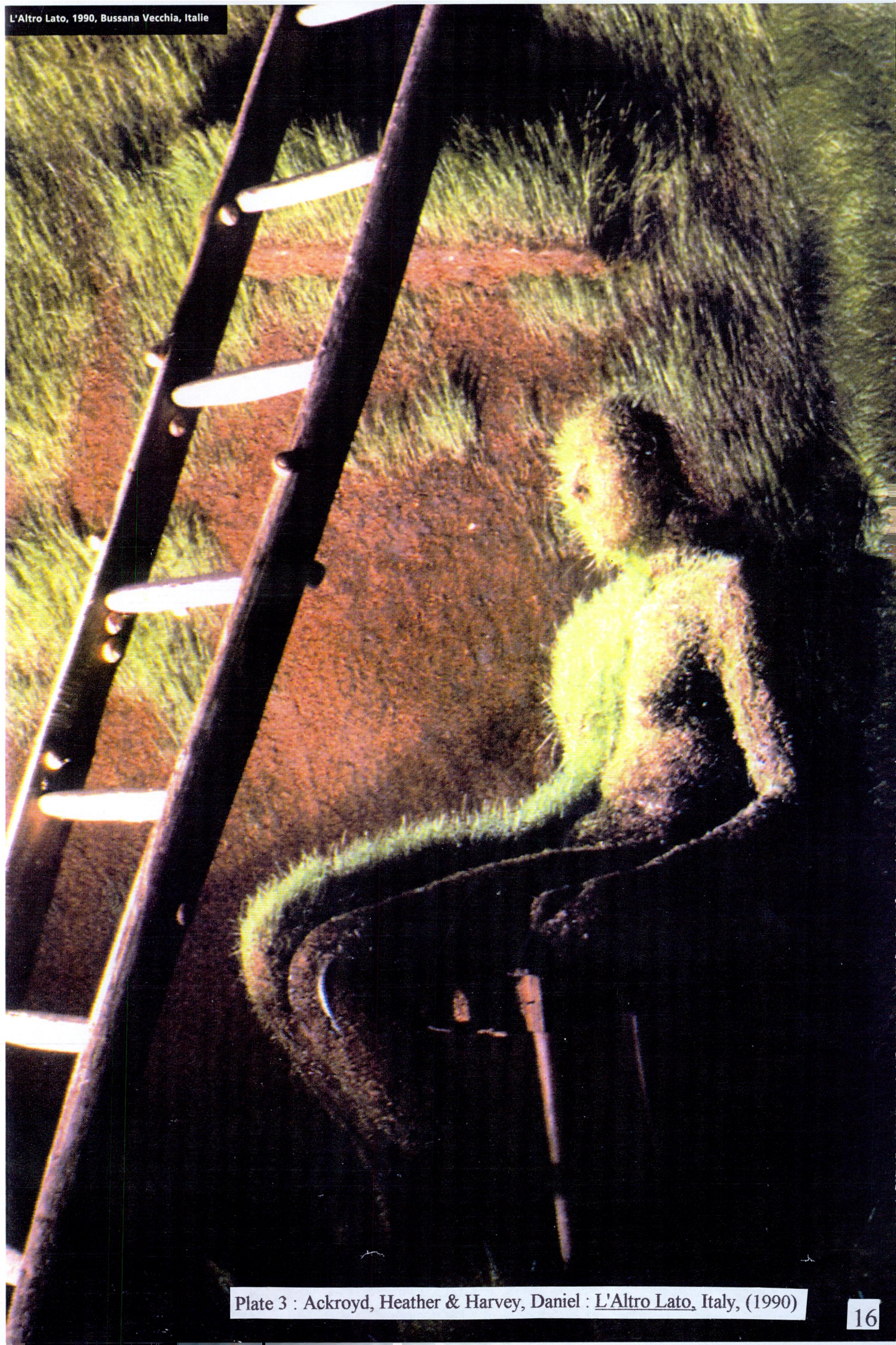
" Elements had ravaged it, it was beyond repair. They seemed to sense the spirit of the house - the installation became a seance that materialised images hidden in the history of the house."(5)

Three sisters had lived in the house. Gradually as Harvey and Ackroyd worked on the project, a story emerged about the sisters through letters found beneath the floorboards,through relatives coming forward to tell stories and facts, and through paintings done by the sisters that evoked















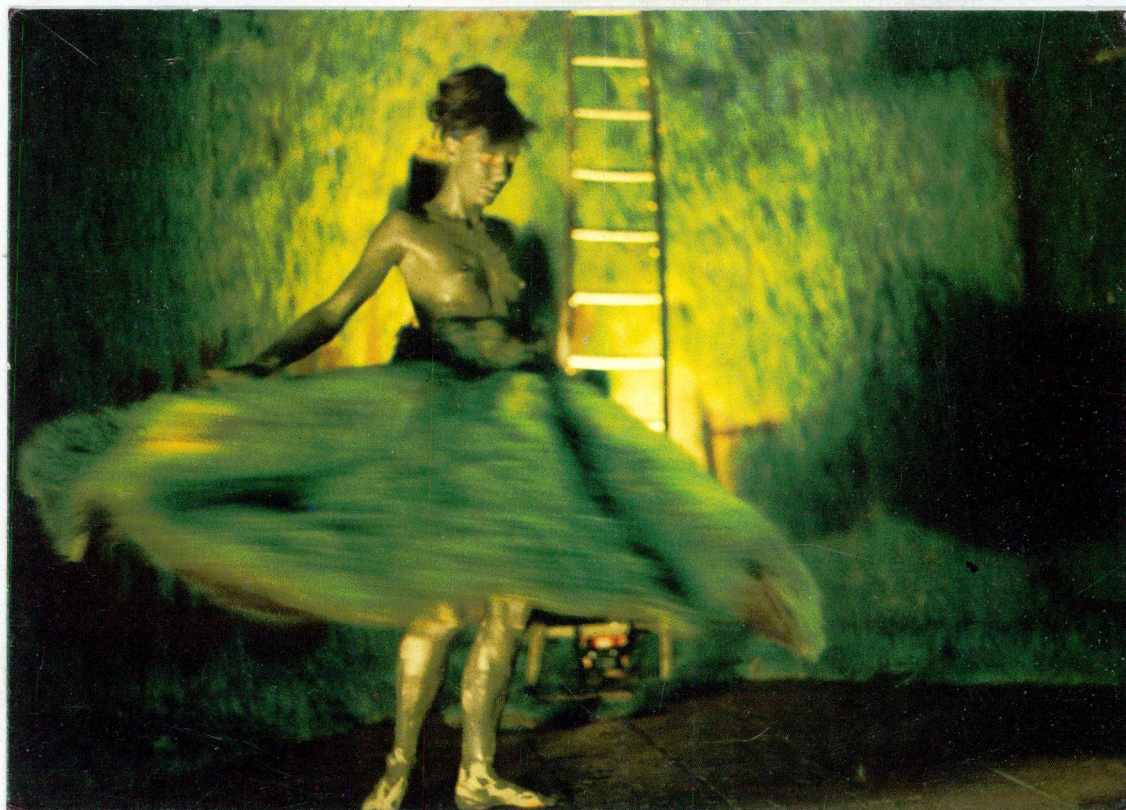


Plate 4 : Ackroyd, Heather : Performance, Italy, (1990)



Plate 5 : Ackroyd, Heather & Harvey, Daniel : Grass Fur Coat, London, (1991)









Plate 6 : Ackroyd & Harvey : Grass House, Hull, (1991)







images already concerning the artists. The three sisters were cast as grass figures. One sat reading a book through which grass grew, one stood gazing wistfully out of an upstairs window and one was suspended over a corn circle that was in a downstairs room. (Plate 7)

" The grass project itself was a seance bringing the other world, a lost world, into the light of day, a seance taking the sculptors into the past of the house" (6)

The elements beginning to surface in their work became apparent in Esprit Implante [Implanted spirit] (1991) in Le Fresnoy, Tourcoing in France. The four primeval elements are considered to be earth, wind, fire and water and in this project they used all four. (Plate 8)

" There was a room flooded with water and a chair with grass growing through it. There was a big mirror hanging on the wall... reflecting the sky .The wall behind it had a hole knocked through it in the top right hand corner. This corner was on fire produced by gas". (7)

All these features were carried through into their other projects in 1992, Living skins, (Serpentine Gallery in London), Prima Materia, (Spoleto, Italy) and The Undertaking, (Palais de Chaillot in Paris, France).

### *FORCEFIELD- The Project*

"...water drips and rings on a shallow flooded floor. Lights whirl twirl across grass velvet verdure. Shadows of photosynthesis are filled and found by waving and waning light. Sounds waft through. Light streams over hidden dreams. Minds float and fingers feel. Nature is nurtured-matured-raptured but is it ever properly, totally captured?" (8)

" We like to find a totally different space that's not particularly an art venue..we like the idea of the art being on the street somehow as we're encouraging different people to come and see an art installation who normally wouldn't" (9)

1993 was the year that took Harvey and Ackroyd to Galway. Arts Festival Director, Trish Forde, invited them to Galway to install a piece for the duration of the festival. As Artistic director, she was looking for something different and thought provoking but also something the people of the West of Ireland could relate to. Bringing the Garden inside and creating a habitable place for it was the inspiration of Harvey and Ackroyd in this aptly named piece Forcefield. (Plate 9) I had the good fortune of



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## WORKSHEET - The Project

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GRASS HOUSE  
Hull 31 1991



Plate 7 : Ackroyd & Harvey : Grass House, Hull, (1991)









Plate 8 : Ackroyd & Harvey : Implanted Spirit, Tourcoing, (1991)







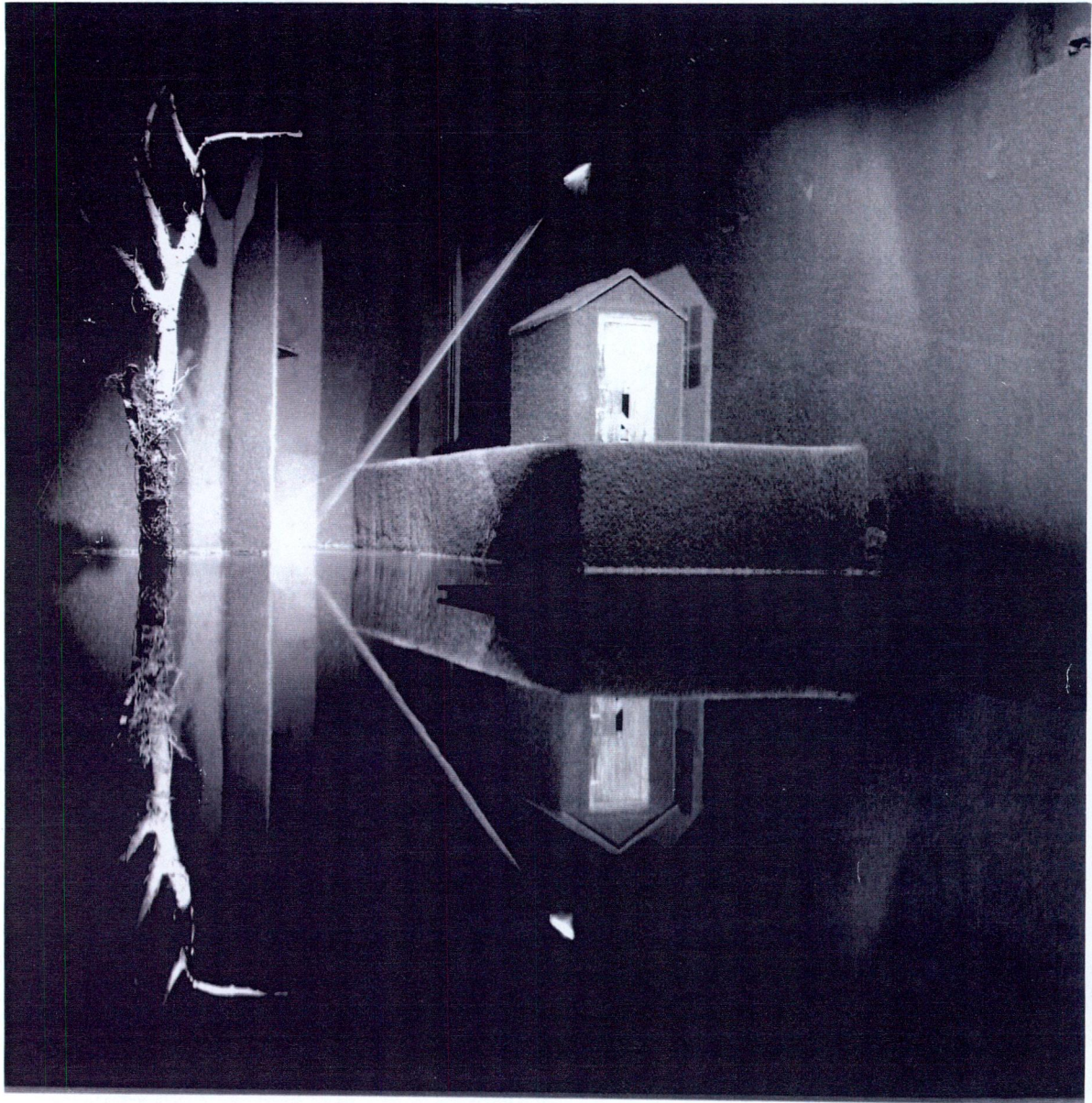


Plate 9 : Ackroyd & Harvey : Forcefield, Galway, (1993)







working with them on this project which I believe was valuable for me, in that it made me look at grass and natural processes in a totally unique and very fresh way.

A huge deserted warehouse was borrowed for the duration of the festival, on Nuns Island in Galway. This space had not been seen previously by the artists before they arrived.

"We'd never actually been inside the interior building so there was a large element of stepping into the unknown" (10)

The place was full of dead rats, bats and thousands of moths that had to be cleared. There was a natural plinth or stage standing in the corner of the building, and the artists decided to concentrate on this area. A team of six volunteers from the festival and the two artists set to work. The walls had to be wetted down thoroughly as the clay that would be applied had to remain damp. Ball clay - a potter's clay - was used, as it can retain water, has good adhesion and does not flake off the walls very easily. Grass seed was planted very densely into the clay by hand. Some sections of the walls were about 30 to 40 foot in height. It was a quite a tedious job and one needed a good head for heights. A large section of the floor was bricked off and a ramp made of wooden planks stretched into it, to encourage the viewer to walk into the piece. The floor was then tarred and flooded inside the bricked area. The blackness of the floor gave an illusion of depth so viewers would be unsure on how deep the water was. This effectively doubled the space of the section used and also was important for its reflecting qualities. [This is another trick that James Turrell uses in his piece The Irish Sky Garden. He uses a reflecting pond in his exterior space to draw the viewer's attention to the ground to look at the reflection of the sky, rather than looking directly up at it. (Plate 10)] A garden shed was erected on the natural stage, that was also covered in grass, and a strong light source was placed inside the window, shining out onto a grass covered wall. Finally a dead elm tree was erected in the pool with another strong light source casting a shadow onto another section of the grass walls. Two cast grass figures were placed either side of the entrance to the exhibition as though they were guarding a place of sanctity.

Sound played an important role in Forcefield. Ackroyd acquired the help of a past colleague, Graeme Miller (from her background in theatre) to assist them on various projects. Miller did not come to Galway, but he worked with a selection of pre-recorded sounds from the building sent to him by the artists.



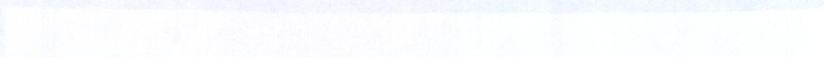






Plate 10 : Turrell, James : Reflecting Pond, Liss Ard, (1993)







"[Sound].. is a difficult medium..because it's very emotive.. I think that onething we all feel.. is that we don't want to use it in a manipulative way but actually try and find an integrity and a rigour.. so that its not some atmospheric accompaniment but is very keyed in with the piece." (11)

Smell is another important factor in their work. When the grass begins to grow it gives off a spring like and fresh smell and towards the end of the piece when the grass is dying and decaying the smell becomes sweeter and more pungent.

"There is an element of smell in our work but I would like to think that it works on many levels, not only visually or through the sound or smell, its the awareness that its [the installation] alive that's interesting." (12)

It is this awareness that encourages the viewer to visit the piece more than once. Each time he visits the piece it will have changed. There is a continuing progression in the evolution of the piece. There is a timeless and magical quality to this work. The viewer walks from the sunlight into a huge dark yet confined space. All the senses, sound, smell and touch are assailed while his eyes adjust to the light. It is like entering into another world of light and perception , the dim lighting, the reflections in the water and the sounds moving gently around him. It could be regarded as a homage to the earth and all it holds, but the viewer leaves with a strange sense of melancholy. One knows it is real and living but it must soon die and then it too will be lost. A reflection of what man has already lost?

" They entice us at first by offering our immediate curiosity, a readily available nostalgia, that of a simple nature from our childhood days when the world of plants was a never ending source of revelations to our young developing senses; the smell of humidity , good and inviting for everything that wants to grow" (13)







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## CHAPTER TWO : *The Gardens of light- An interior perspective*

Harvey and Ackroyd have broken ground with the concept of a garden by bringing it from its normal exterior location, to an interior one. The garden takes on a totally different dimension when moved inside a building. It is almost a reversal of archaeology - rather than excavating a man-made site or structure, they actively clothe structures and give them life through the use of grass. All the elements of the garden are used in Harvey's and Ackroyd's work. They use clay, grass, water and light but the light is controlled and usually artificial. This controlled use of light can be used to record images on the walls of grass. In a statement issued by the artists in September 1993, they stated;

" ....the capacity of grass to record images forms the basis of our recent and future installation work. Transformation is a key element ...and nature is our source material" (1)

I asked them in an interview in December 1993 did they feel, by controlling the light that they were thus harnessing nature;

"We work under controlled light situations but.. I don't feel like its harnessing nature. I think it's actually very difficult to harness nature, man manages for periods of time , but nature has a tendency to be stronger and more erratic and can do things that man doesn't expect.." (2)

In Forcefield the light was a very important element. The artificial light source was shone onto the elm tree and the shed and cast shadows onto the grass walls.. The light in the dark building went through three phases:

1. The projected light on the object (on the elm tree) that cast the shadow onto the wall of grass.
2. A general light in the building that showed the yellow imprint of the grass where the shadow had been .
3. A dark phase where only the natural light of the building could be observed, and the viewer's eyes had to adjust.

The way in which the grass is presented is quite unnatural but it has the effect of making the viewer stop and observe when he sees grass defying gravity.

"I think there is a level where people don't actually believe that its grass.. they get very close to it and start to look at the shoot of the grass, the seed, the roots and a lot of people actually pluck out a piece and look at it...I think its quite unusual for people to get their noses an inch away from







grass and really look at it." (3)

Ackroyd's and Harvey's work is drawn from the earth and because of this, they found they got a very strong emotive response from the Irish people who visited the installation in Galway. The Irish have had very strong ties with the land. John B. Keane's powerful drama The Field is an example of how this strong this love can be. The central character of the play is Bull McCabe, whose love was so potent that he killed the man who tried to buy his field.

"Land is all that matters, Tadhg boy, own your own land" (4)

This love of the land has survived in rural areas especially, with older generations. The priest in The Field describes the passion for the land very aptly;

"...there is also the hunger for land and in this parish, you and your fathers before you did not own your own land-and that has increased this unappeasable hunger for the land...But how far are you prepared to go to satisfy this hunger?...Are you prepared to kill for land?" (5)

This struggle for the land has strong connections with the Roman Catholic Faith and can be traced back to the penal laws in Ireland; also God was prayed to for a good harvest and thanked accordingly. Because of this, the overwhelming response to Forcefield was one that stirred a very spiritual reaction in the people that came to see it. This also occurs in Turrell's work.

"There was an almost reverential air in the warehouse, a bit like being in one of those old musty cathedrals they have on the continent" (6)

However the artists do not intend to inspire or give the viewer a deep or religious message.

"It appears in certain places especially Ireland, there was a sense of awe and I suppose a respect for the work that did verge on being spiritual even the nuns from Nuns' Island came to see it." (7)

This raises the question - is this experience of spirituality and the land unique to the Irish? I believe if this question was posed in a rural area fifty years ago the answer would be yes, religion and the land were inseparable but this is gradually being lost with the country village in decline as the younger generations flock to the cities, losing their identities, and the talent of living off the earth. This installation in return sparks a longing for what is lost to the present generation of urbanised Irish. The spiritual message was not intended by Harvey and Ackroyd..







"It's not our intention to elicit such a response. I do feel we are touching on something prior to spirituality, its more primeval " (8)  
Primeval man held a reverence for the earth which Ackroyd and Harvey wish to reflect in their work. The authoritative voice on the spirit of the earth, that survived into the middle ages from prehistoric times, was held by the Alchemist, Basilus Valentius .

"The earth is not a dead body but is inhabited by a spirit that is life and soul. All created things, minerals included, draw their strength from the earth spirit, that is, it's life and soul ... this spirit is life .. and it gives nourishment to all living things it shelters in its womb." (9)

This is a good example of the affinity early men had with his environment, when they believed that the earth would sustain them as long as they respected the earth. Forcefield is an example of Valentius's "womb" but on a smaller scale. The building could be regarded as the womb housing and nourishing the souls of its 'worshippers' (i.e. the viewers) with the living skin of grass drawing it's strength from the light and water. The sense of the spirit can be traced back through Irish legend and folklore. Energies running through the earth's natural channels were picked up by diviners, and were recognised as sacred. These channels became known as fairy lines, and through the generations myths and legends sprung up around areas that were connected to the past, from the early passage graves to the ring forts. Superstition held that it was bad luck to venture onto or near any place held by the fairies. This in turn was the only protection the national monuments of Ireland had over the centuries.

The mystical regard the Irish had for elements is reflected in Harvey's and Ackroyd's respect for the buildings they work with. They will only use objects found in or around the building in their work. The elm tree in Forcefield was found outside the warehouse as was the door of the garden shed. The garden shed was used to create an interior space inside the building. Even though the viewer could not enter the shed, it gave a sense of an unknown component or feeling of mystery. The door was left slightly chinked open with the light shining through, as if inviting the viewer to come closer. They had intended to include a ladder found in the building, to give a sense of climbing up towards the heavens but felt it became too symbolic. This image surfaced by itself, through the building's own natural fabrication. The roof of the warehouse that was in bad repair,







let in a shaft of light that reflected on the water whenever the sun came out. The beam drew the viewer's eyes up and out of the building to another beyond.

Through the use of constituents that are related to the garden, the planned use of space, the ramp that encourages the viewer to walk into the space, and the fact that grass is being used, the viewer can relate to Forcefield on a number of fundamental levels. He can acknowledge that what he can see is alive and growing, but because it is shown in a totally different perspective from that of any other garden he may have observed, it leaves a lasting impression on him. The life of the piece is limited, it has about a month before it will start to decay and die. The short life span of the piece reflects on what will soon be lost to the viewer.

"...the grass will fall from the walls as the clay[in which it is planted] dries and flakes. The death of the skin becomes the possibility of renewal." (10)







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### CHAPTER THREE - *James Turrell, the early years.*

" Vision is by no means an automatic function of our physiological apparatus. There is much evidence that vision itself is a mode of thinking, When we see, we interpret the world around us and ourselves in it. Sharpening our awareness, heighting our sensibility, disciplining our vision, will increase our power to understand the world, appreciate its richness and cope with its problems." (1)

Turrell uses light to create sculpture out of what we normally think of as empty space. He manipulates perception itself and, over the years has succeeded in finding innovative ways of making pure radiant light energy perceptible as substance. He makes it possible for the viewer to see light as light rather than as an illuminator of objects. Turrell's background is in mechanics and is a keen amateur pilot. He is quick to disassociate himself with the idea that his work resembles minimalist or conceptual art. His decision to work with light stems from an incident before the Vietnam war, when he was a pilot for Aer America. He had to fly an 11- seater plane out of Laos to rescue Tibetan monks high in the Himalayas. It was there that he became fascinated by the quality of light at high altitudes and he became influenced by the spirituality of the Tibetan Buddhism. From 1965 onwards Turrell consistently produced installation works in galleries that were notable for there imposing presences but they had no apparent saleable object. The first approach Turrell had towards light was using artificial methods. In Afrum-Proto(1966) (Plate 11) he projected very intense rectangular shapes unto white walls that were then concentrated into a corner. This artificial use of light was to be his fascination for the next four years. In 1970 he first used natural light in the Mendota Stoppages. He moved sections of the Mendota Hotel's roof, in California, to access the sky. These sections were of a very definite shape, either rectangular or circular (Plate 12) with a neon light source inside to maintain a balance between interior and exterior light. This gave a 'surface' to the sky. Turrell explains;

" The sense of closure at the juncture appears to be a glassy film stretched across the opening, with an indefinable space beyond this transparency that changes with sky conditions and sun angles."(2)







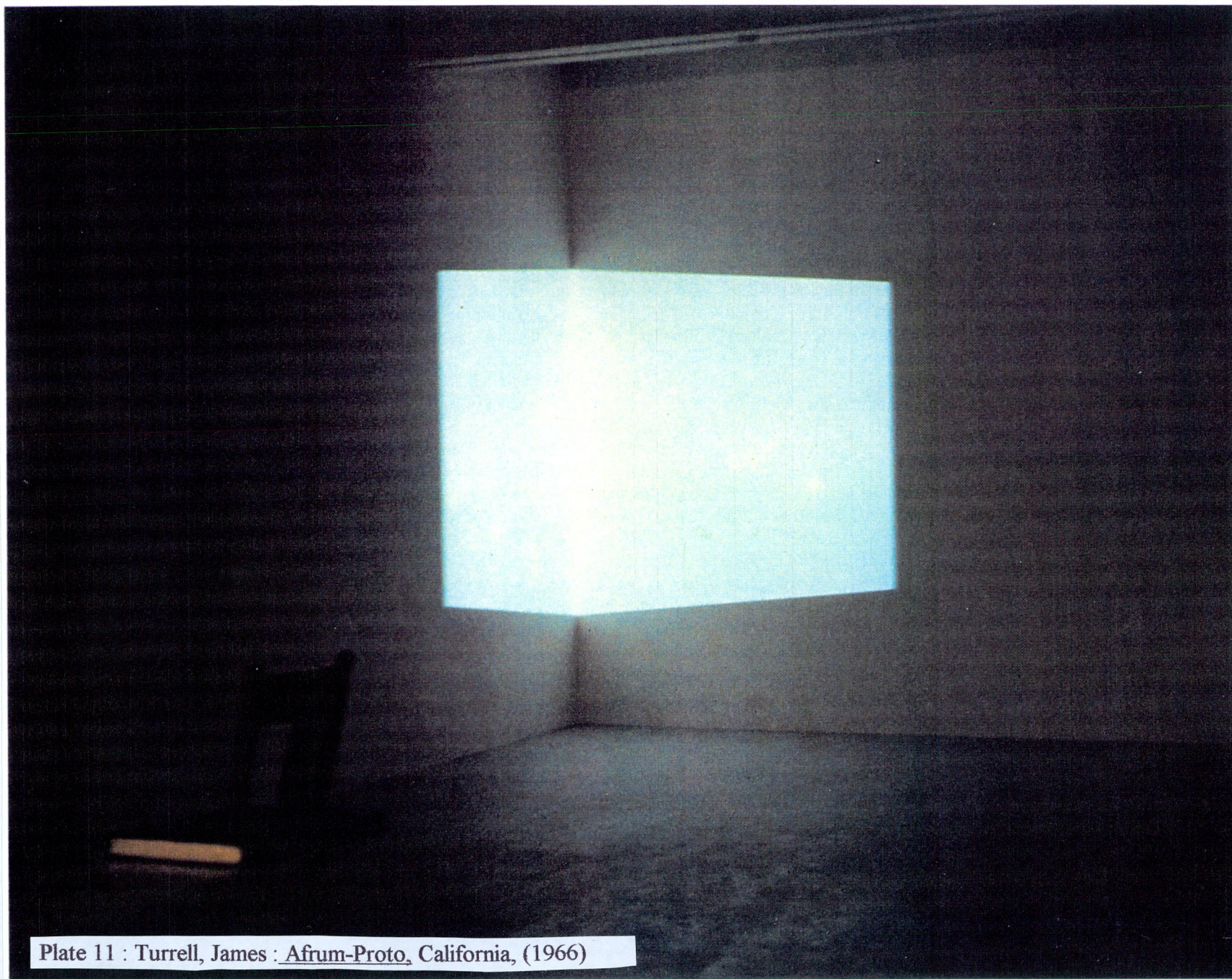


Plate 11 : Turrell, James : Afrum-Proto, California, (1966)







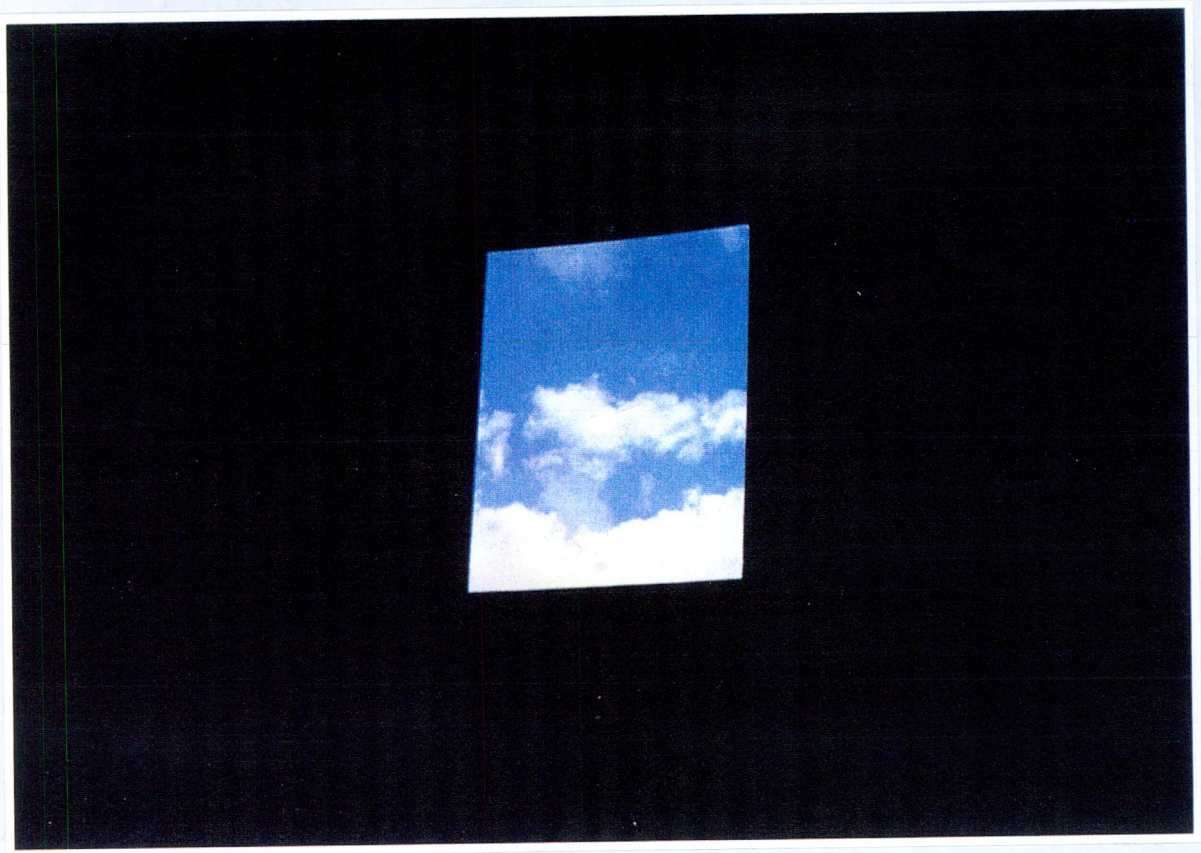
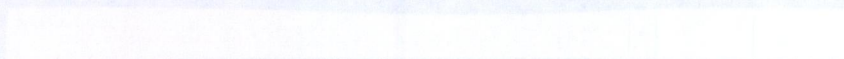


Plate 12 : Turrell, James : Mendota Stoppages, California (1970)







### *Roden Crater - The Project.*

In 1974 James Turrell devoted seven months and five hundred hours of flight on an aerial search of western America. He was looking for a sight to realise an idea and shape forming in his mind. Supported by a grant from the Guggenheim Foundation he searched for a mountain that was beautiful and powerful and privately owned so it could be bought.

" A place that embodied the dynamic forces of the earth while reaching into the dry clear western sky." (3)

He found all these qualities in Roden Crater (Plate 13) located in the San Francisco volcanic field near Flagstaff in Northern Arizona. It is one of twelve extinct volcanoes which last erupted in 1066. He has begun to construct a series of chambers and corridors so that the visitor can witness cosmic events in the heavens and different lighting effects. This departure into nature from confined spaces was a radical change for Turrell. The spaces will be dug from the surface but will be fitted into the natural outline of the crater. Turrell is taking care to minimise the disturbance to the area and the surrounding animal and plant life. Any native vegetation destroyed during the construction will be replaced as naturally as possible. The interior space will be classic white plaster rooms and corridors with no hint of the natural and no form of imagery to detract from the quality of light.

" It is important to understand that my work has no image. There is nothing inside; no image or design. Absolutely nothing. There never has and there is never going to be anything. It is non-vicarious art. It is not, not thinking but it is not thinking in words and that very state, that quality is what I try to attain." (4)

The exterior of the crater will be united with its surrounds and does not attempt to eradicate any of its formal impact on the landscape.

Turrell believes it is vitally important to link his work with the past civilisations that lived by the crater.

"What Turrell plans with the crater is to make a natural observatory in the ancient tradition of Stonehenge ..









Plate 13 : Turrell, James : Aerial view of the Roden Crater, Arizona,  
(1982)







..it will be an instrument fashioned from native elements  
to track the orderly passage of planets, stars, earth, sun  
and moon." (5)

Turrell wants his work not only to be considered as art but he wants to give the viewer something to perceive and to hold unto after his experiences in these spaces.

"The visitor will be directly and most intensively confronted  
with Turrell's ideas of a special quality of consciousness and  
a rediscovery of primeval knowledge."(6)

Four primary spaces are being constructed in the crater in line with the four points on the compass, North, South, East, and West. The east space is constructed to observe the rising sun across a reflecting pool. Alternatively, the west space will be used to look at the setting sun. The sun will only light up the chamber in a flood of light, just before the sun is due to set. This lighting of the chamber is similar to the experience of light when the winter sun fills the chamber of Newgrange on the shortest day of the year. The south space opens to the sky directly above to show the glory of the sun all year around. This space is an important space for astronomical sightings in the night sky. (It will have a map of the celestial stars made from stainless steel set into a concrete floor.) The north space has two openings, one that projects the image of the sky onto the floor so the viewer is looking down instead of up and another opening that will frame the North star at night.

There are a number of secondary spaces under construction the primary one being the fumarole. This is a chamber with a narrow tunnel-like opening leading off from it. This again is built as an observatory like the south space but once every 19.81 years, when the moon is at its lowest, the tunnel acting as a pinhole camera will draw the image of the moon into the chamber, and project it unto the back wall. This image should be so clear the viewer should be able to discern the craters on the moon's surface. The other important space in the crater is the actually space created by the crater itself. The viewer can lie back in the hollow of the crater. The rim of the crater acts as a frame to the sky, this frame gives a domed effect to the sky which will be referred to through this text as celestial vaulting. (Plate 14)







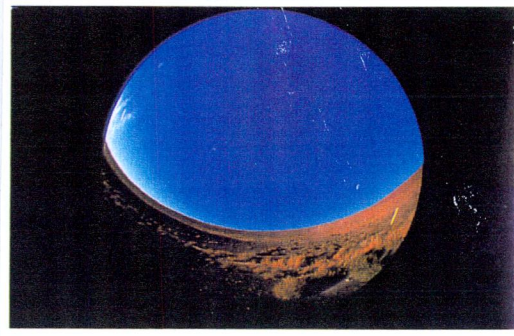
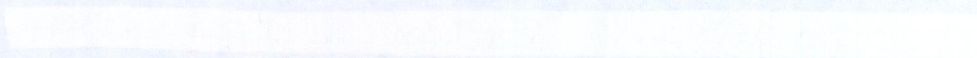
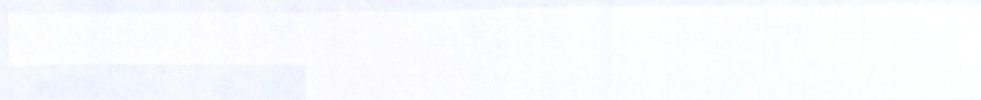


Plate 14 : Turrell, James : View from Crater bowl illustrating the phenomenon of 'celestial vaulting', Arizona, (1982)



Plate 15 : Liss Ard Foundation : Tower lodge, Liss Ard, January 6th 1994







### *The Irish Sky Garden - The project*

"Allowing people to perceive their perceptions making them aware of their perceptions- We've decided to investigate this and make people conscious of their consciousness...Working with the sense of sensing, awareness, perceptions, a reflexive act...Working with non verbal experience." (7)

The Irish sky garden is situated on Liss Ard estate about three miles outside Skibereen town in County Cork. The estate was first own by the O'Donovan family who erected a tower lodge at the entrance to this estate; this has been restored to its former glory and is now the official entrance to the Sky Garden. (Plate 15) A prehistoric ring fort 'Lios Ard' (that gave the site its name) and Carraig fada, a mountain of importance that I shall be discussing in greater detail and Lake Abisealy surround the area around the Sky Garden and give it a strong link with Irish heritage. In the late eighties, German born Veith Turske, donated 30 acres of land to the Liss Ard Foundation. In 1989, Turske invited James Turrell over to Ireland with the intention of developing one space. Both Turske's and Turrell's vision proved to be more than either expected. Their original intention of one space turn into five spaces when Turrell saw the potential of the land at Liss Ard. In the spring of 1990, Turrell moved to Skibbereen, and spent the whole summer working on designs for the Sky Garden.

"...the artist [Turrell] has moved from the constricted and constructed spaces of the cities into the unbounded outdoors, embracing loneliness and an awe inspiringly beautiful nature affording little in the way of creature comfort." (8)

The Irish Sky Garden consists of three primary spaces (Plates 16 & 17)-the crater, the mound and the pyramid. Each chamber or space will generate a different perception of the sky. The crater will give the effect of celestial vaulting, the mound will generate a flatter but still domed effect, and the pyramid will give a totally flat perception of the sky. There will be two subsidiary spaces, the sky wall and the grotto. On my visit to the Sky Garden in January 1994, I was introduced to the work in progress by Brian Hennessy, one of the employees of the organisation. The project needs a









Plate 16 : Turrell, James : Aerial view of the Irish Sky Garden, Liss Ard,  
(1990)







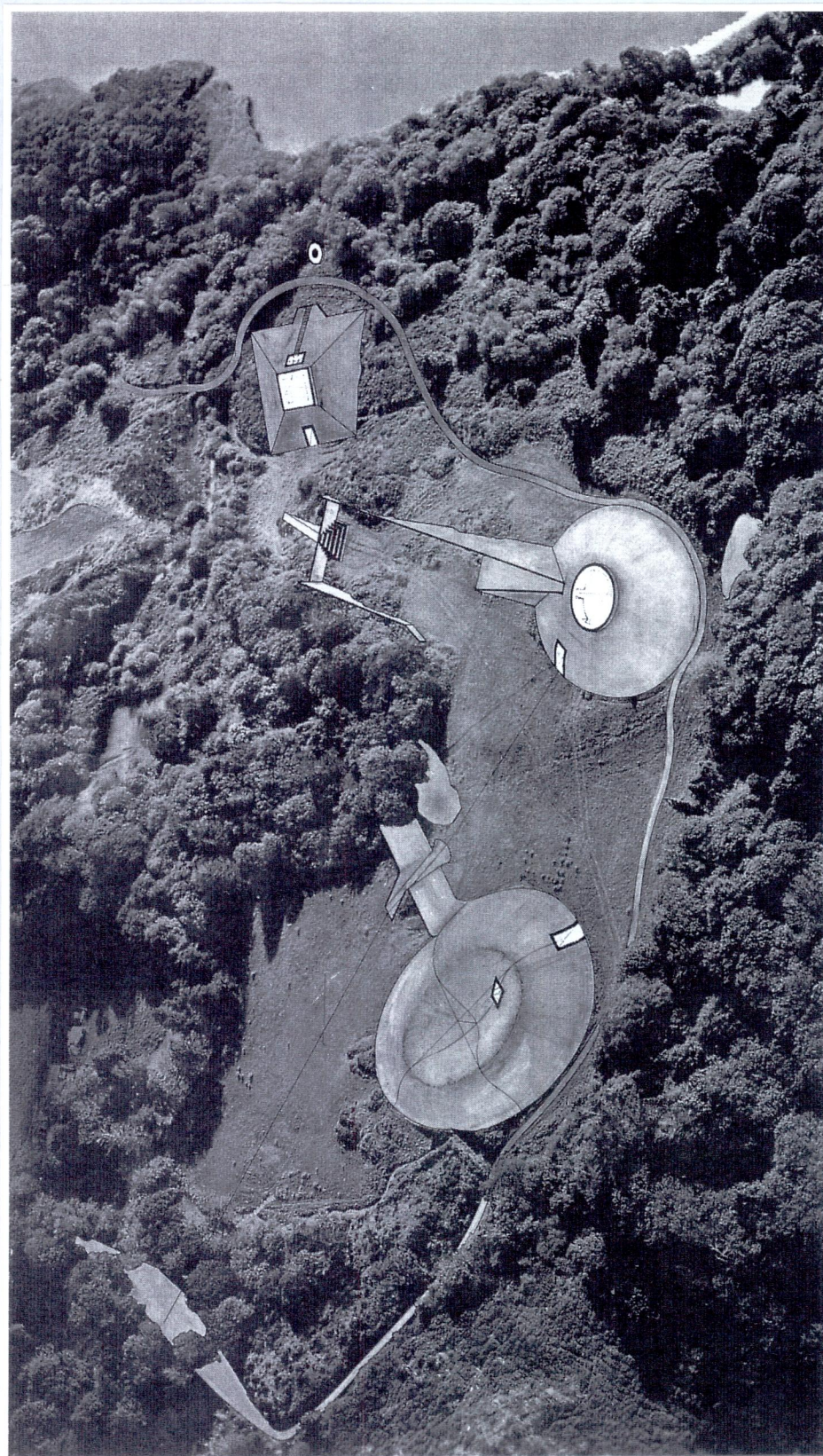
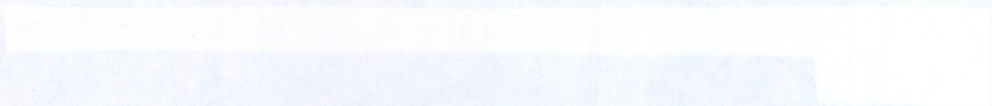


Plate 17 : Turrell, James : Overall site plan of the Irish Sky Garden, Liss Ard, (1990)







big budget, that so far has been financed by various companies and private individuals. The proposed plans of the Sky Garden can only progress at the rate that funding becomes available, but it is hoped the Crater which is about half complete, will be open to the general public by June 1994. Work has started on all the initial spaces, so I found it possible to relate to the project as a whole. The journey around the sky garden is intended to be a personal one. It changes the way the viewer would normally look at the heavens and shows the potential of the sky to change and reflect light.

" The Irish Sky Garden is really dealing with the sky with its many atmospheric changes" (9)

All the spaces have been inspired by naturally occurring shapes already in existence. The completed spaces are referred to by Turrell as "enhanced life forms". (10) In order to bring the reader on a journey around the Sky Garden, the project shall be described as if it is completed.

### *The Crater*

The first space on the journey is the Crater.(Plates 18 & 19). It is the only space that does not have a 'through' path : the entrance and the exit are the same. The opening is framed by monolithic blocks of stone. A long narrow tunnel with steps sloping upwards leads the viewer inside the crater. At the top of the steps there are warm, neon-toned lights that give the sky an opaque appearance. When the viewer steps out into the crater, he sees a gently sloping green hollow valley, with the sky reaching down to meet the rim of the Crater above him.

"The first important moment is the situation looking out.  
The situation brings the sky down to the space you  
are in and no longer out in the unseizable universe." (11)

The Crater rises on all sides around the viewer. In the middle of the crater lies a stone bed with a head rest. The viewer can lie back on the bed and have a clear view of the sky. This gives him a total visual field of about 180 degrees and the celestial vaulting observed in the Roden Crater can also be seen. The line on the rim of the crater is unobstructed, and allows a perfectly clear vision of the sky.(Plate 20) There are no images or ornamentation inside the crater, only grass. As with Harvey's and Ackroyd's work the viewer will never see the piece in the same form, as all of their work is in a constant state of flux; there is the continual growth of grass in Forcefield and the sky's textures and quality are continually changing in the Irish Sky Garden. An intriguing factor of Turrell's work is the fact that it



The first of these is the fact that the garden has been planted by a young man and woman who are both of them very young. The second is the fact that the garden is very small and is situated in a very quiet part of the town. The third is the fact that the garden is very well kept and is a very pleasant surprise to those who visit it. The fourth is the fact that the garden is very well watered and is a very pleasant surprise to those who visit it. The fifth is the fact that the garden is very well kept and is a very pleasant surprise to those who visit it.

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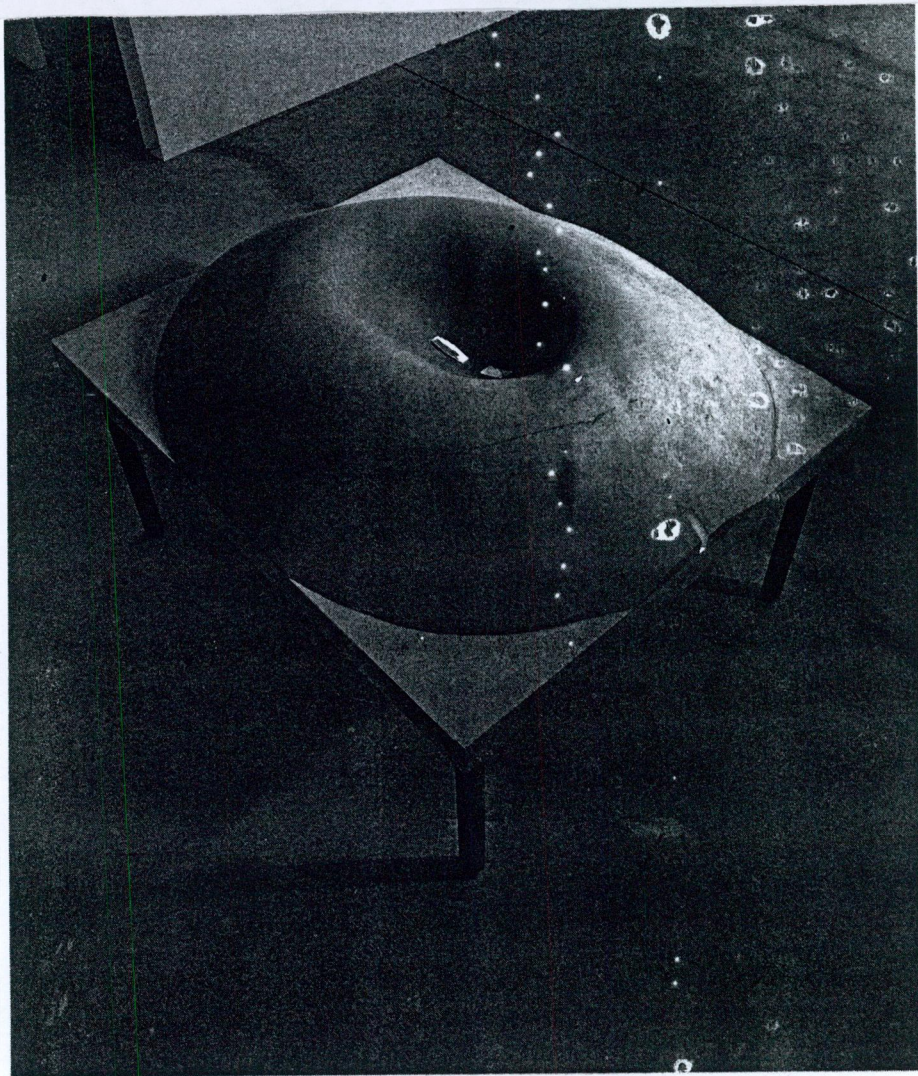


Plate 18 : Turrell, James : Model of Crater, Liss Ard (1991)



Plate 19 : Turrell, James : Work in progress, Liss Ard (1994)





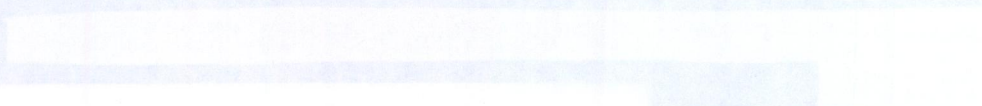
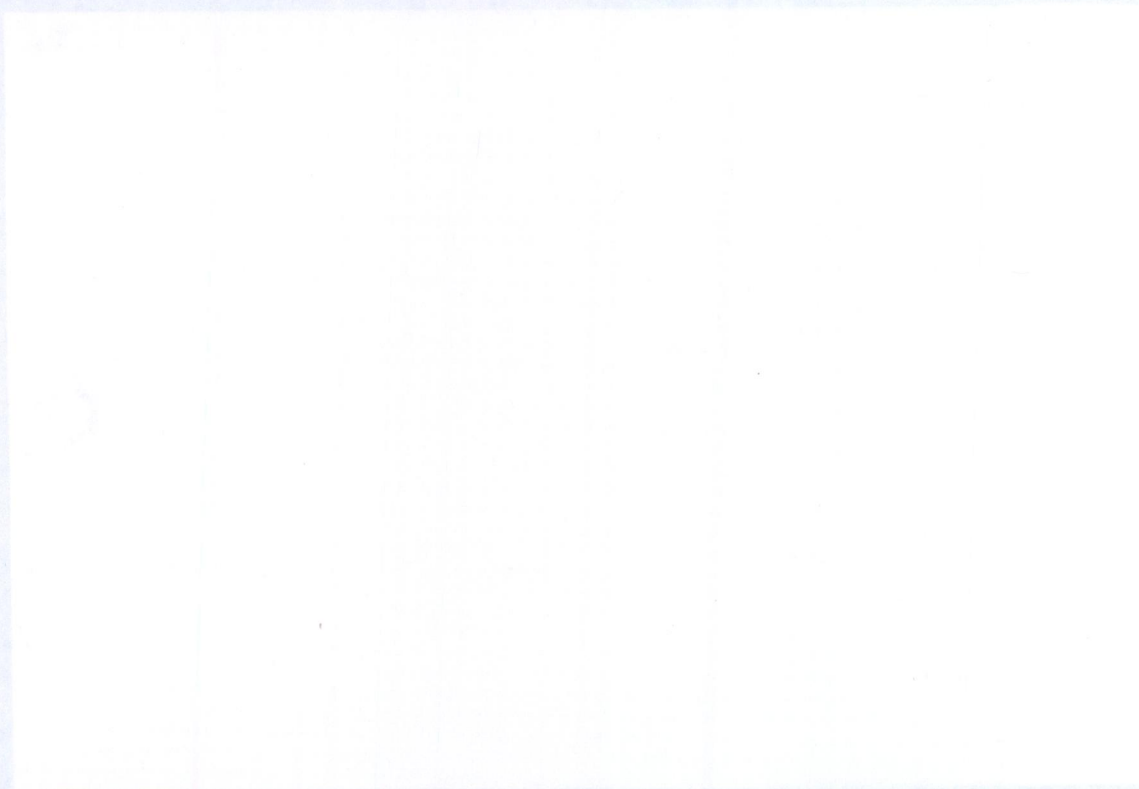




Plate 20 : Turrell, James : Celestial vaulting in the Irish Sky Garden, Liss Ard, (1994)









can be seen at night. He believes its important to see his works during the night to bring the viewer in contact with the heavens.

"..having access to the universe very much relies on the aspects of the night." (12)

Another intriguing part of his work is sound, or in this case the lack of it. Liss Ard is an isolated place and therefore one does not here much traffic or other man-made noise pollution, but the sounds of the wind and the nearby waterfall can be heard. Once inside the Crater however, all noise is muffled and distant. The viewer feels he is moved to a different level where he is alone with his soul on the planet observing the heavens. It is a very peaceful and solitary experience.

" Perceiving a starry night one expands into it. It can make people feel very small and have this agoraphobia. But this surveying out and having a bigger territory is expansive and actually is quite thrilling. Just as loneliness is not necessarily negative." (13)

### *The mound*

This is referred to as space two. (Plate 21) The mound is known as the heart of the garden as it connects the pyramid to the crater. The viewer enters a dark corridor illuminated naturally by vertical shafts of light from the outside of the mound. The steps lead the viewer into a circular room which is finely plastered and painted white. The shape of the room is determined by the shape of the outer space. The sky opening on the roof is circular and almost the size of the floor, giving a very dominant frame to the dome of sky one can see. A stone bench with an inclined back runs around the wall. There is a hidden neon light source under the seat, that intermingles with the outside light giving a balance between inside and out especially at night. This light is most effective at dawn and dusk, bringing out purple and navy hues of light. There is a raised seat on the stone bench in the mound. When the viewer sits on it he will be rewarded with a view of the peak of Carraig fada mountain in the distance. (Plate 22) The ring fort at Liss Ard is aligned to this mountain, so Turrell is making a conscious attempt again to link his work with the primeval monuments of Irish pre-history. Leaving the mound brings the viewer into a narrow funnel-shaped opening, down a sloping ramp and into a secondary space called the Sky Wall.



and the other side of the house, the house was built on a hill, and the other side of the hill was the sea.

There was a garden in front of the house, and the garden was very beautiful.

The garden was full of flowers, and the flowers were very beautiful.

There was a path in the garden, and the path was very beautiful.

The path was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.

There was a well in the garden, and the well was very beautiful.

The well was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.

There was a pond in the garden, and the pond was very beautiful.

The pond was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.

There was a stream in the garden, and the stream was very beautiful.

The stream was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.

There was a bridge in the garden, and the bridge was very beautiful.

The bridge was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.

There was a gate in the garden, and the gate was very beautiful.

The gate was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.

There was a wall in the garden, and the wall was very beautiful.

The wall was made of stones, and the stones were very beautiful.



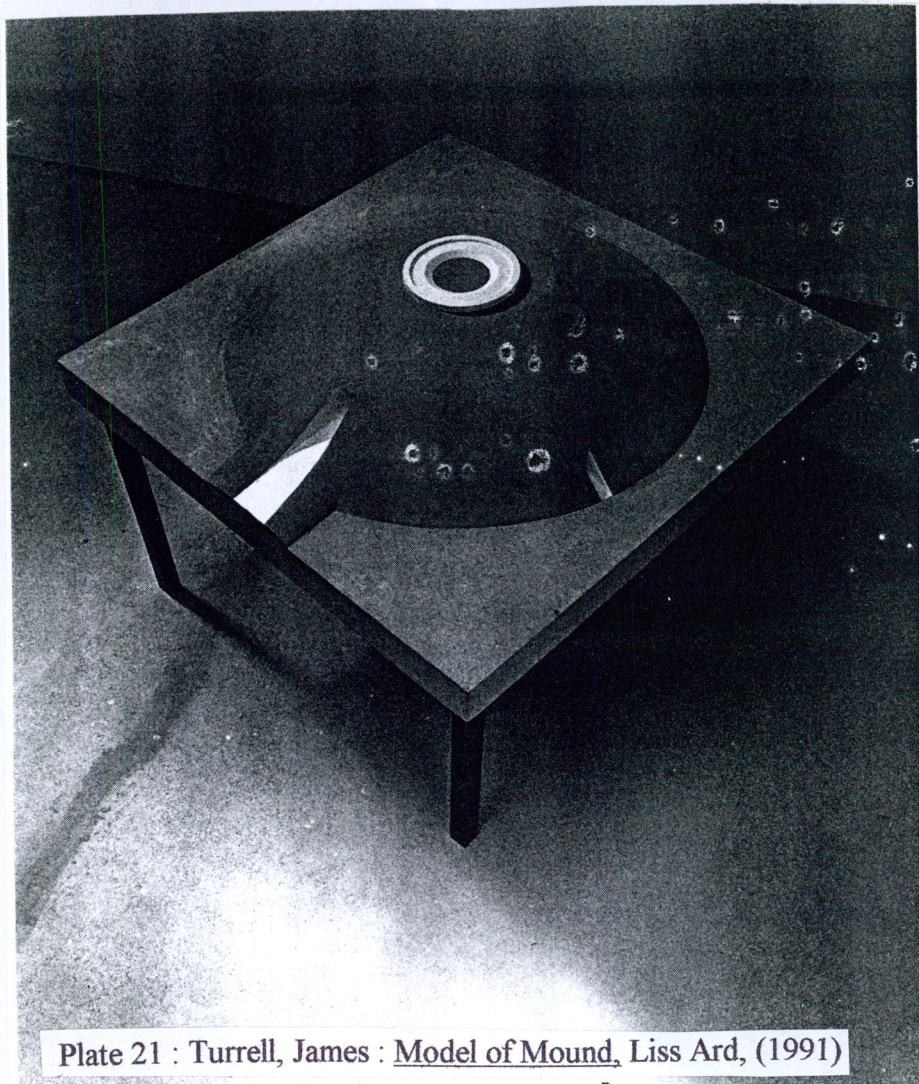
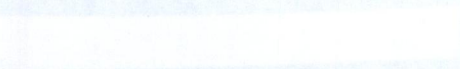


Plate 21 : Turrell, James : Model of Mound, Liss Ard, (1991)



Plate 22 : Turrell, James : View of Carraigfada, Liss Ard, (1994)







### *The Sky Wall*

When the viewer leaves the mound, he walks down a sloping ramp. (Plate 23) The roof of the funnel is getting higher so the corridor is widening toward the brightness at the end of the tunnel. The right hand side of this tunnel continues on from the mouth. The land underneath his feet parallel to the wall slopes up towards the horizon line. At the peak of this slope another wall is erected at a right angle to the right-hand side. A set of steps lead up to this barrier-view wall. On the viewers left hand side another wall is constructed about half the length of the right wall. All three walls obstruct the view of trees or anything man-made. It is similar to a courtyard or being walled into a prison. Because this space is very likely to induce a feeling of being trapped or claustrophobia there is an exit door on the viewer's right that leads into the woods and an ultimate release. A door on the left hand side leads into a space the size of a telephone booth with a square patch in the roof opening to the sky. Reaching the summit of the steps on the far wall, the viewer can again see the distant peak of Carraig Fada.

### *The Pyramid*

The pyramid is similar in many respects to the mound, (Plate 24 & 25) but this time the interior space is square. The viewer again enters by a tunnel lit by natural light. A square room with a square opening in the roof gives the sky a perfectly flat appearance. The exit of the pyramid slopes upwards, leading to a terrace with stone benches, set into the side of the pyramid. From this seat the viewer is given the present of the full, panoramic view of the surrounding lake, framed by the surrounding land and the mountains and the ever expansive sky.

" After the walk around the site, which will convey an expanded awareness of perception one feels as if one one has seen the world with new eyes".(14)

### *The Grotto*

A narrow flight of steps extends steeply down to the lake from the terrace. (Plate 26 & 27) This takes the viewer to a funnel shape hollow, that opens into a dark space. Water that flows from the mountains runs into this area, that the viewer reaches by stepping stones. The water runs into a shallow rounded trench where a jagged rock is placed. Ferns and moss grow up towards a small opening in the top of the dome. As the







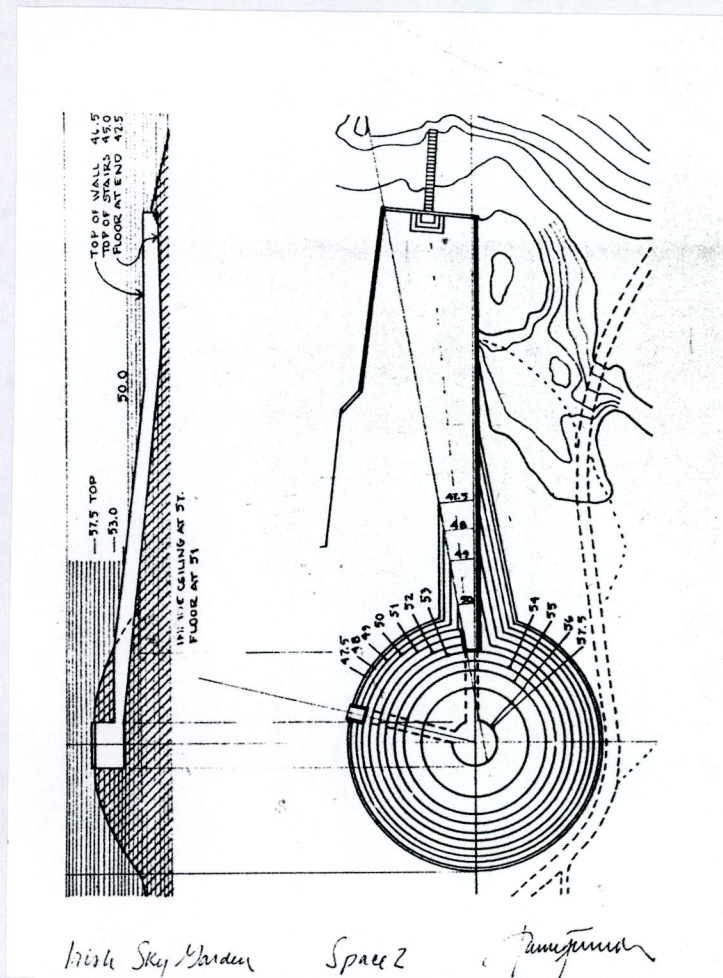


Plate 23 : Turrell, James : Plans for mound and Sky Wall, Liss Ard, (1991)







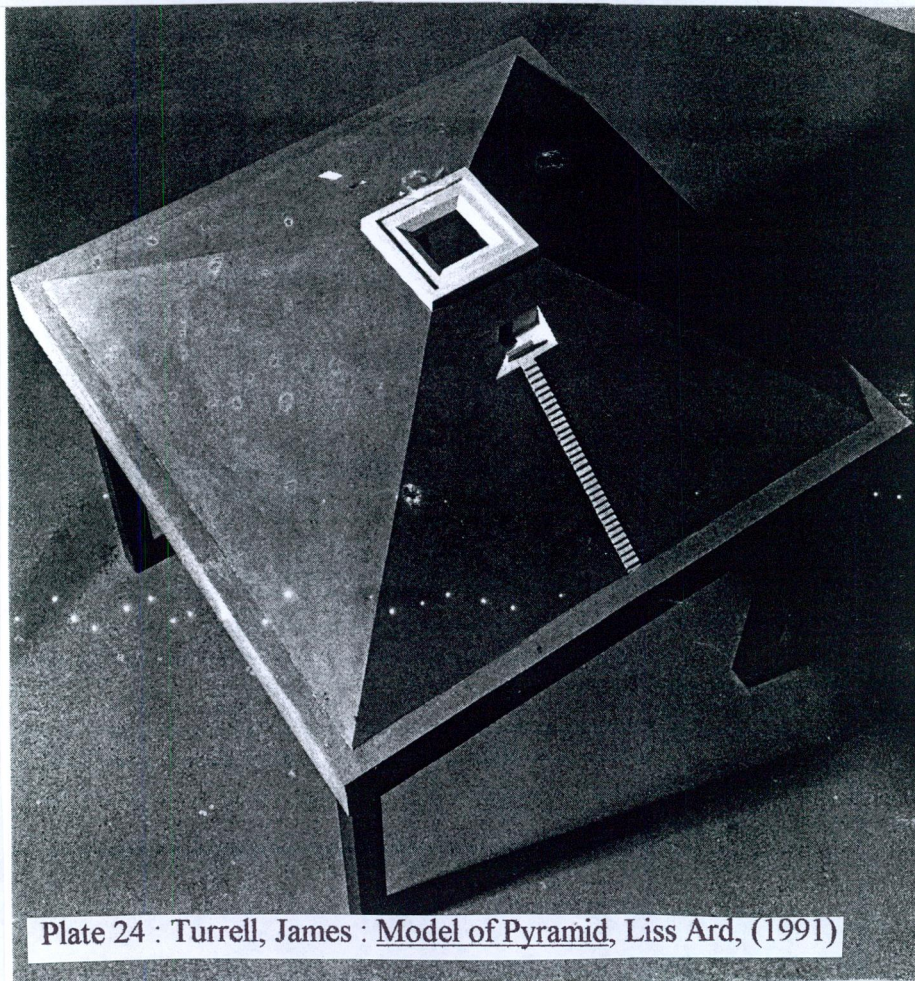


Plate 24 : Turrell, James : Model of Pyramid, Liss Ard, (1991)



Plate 25 : Turrell, James : Work in progress, Liss Ard, (1994)







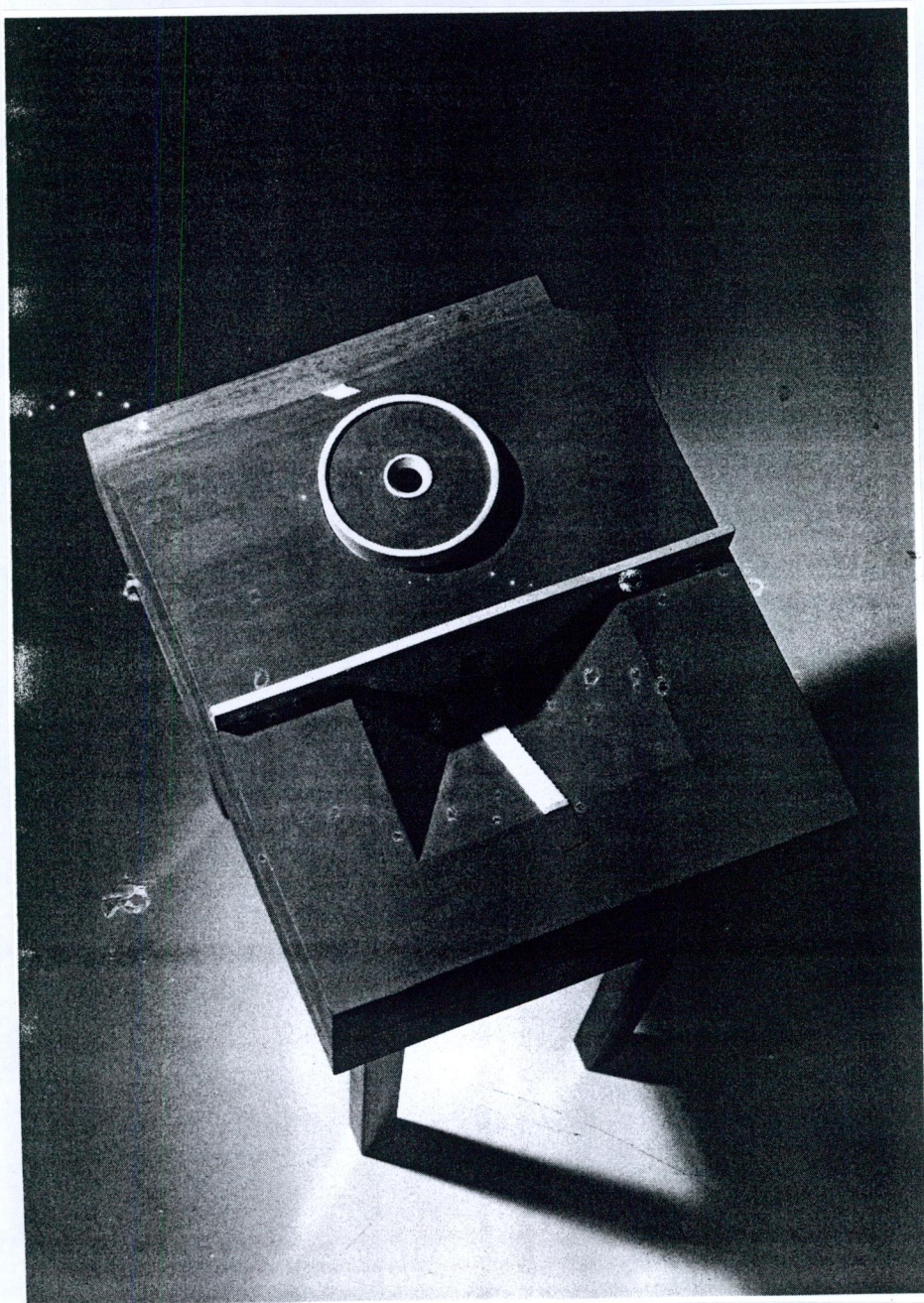
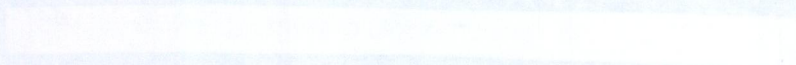


Plate 26 : Turrell, James : Model of Grotto, Liss Ard, (1991)

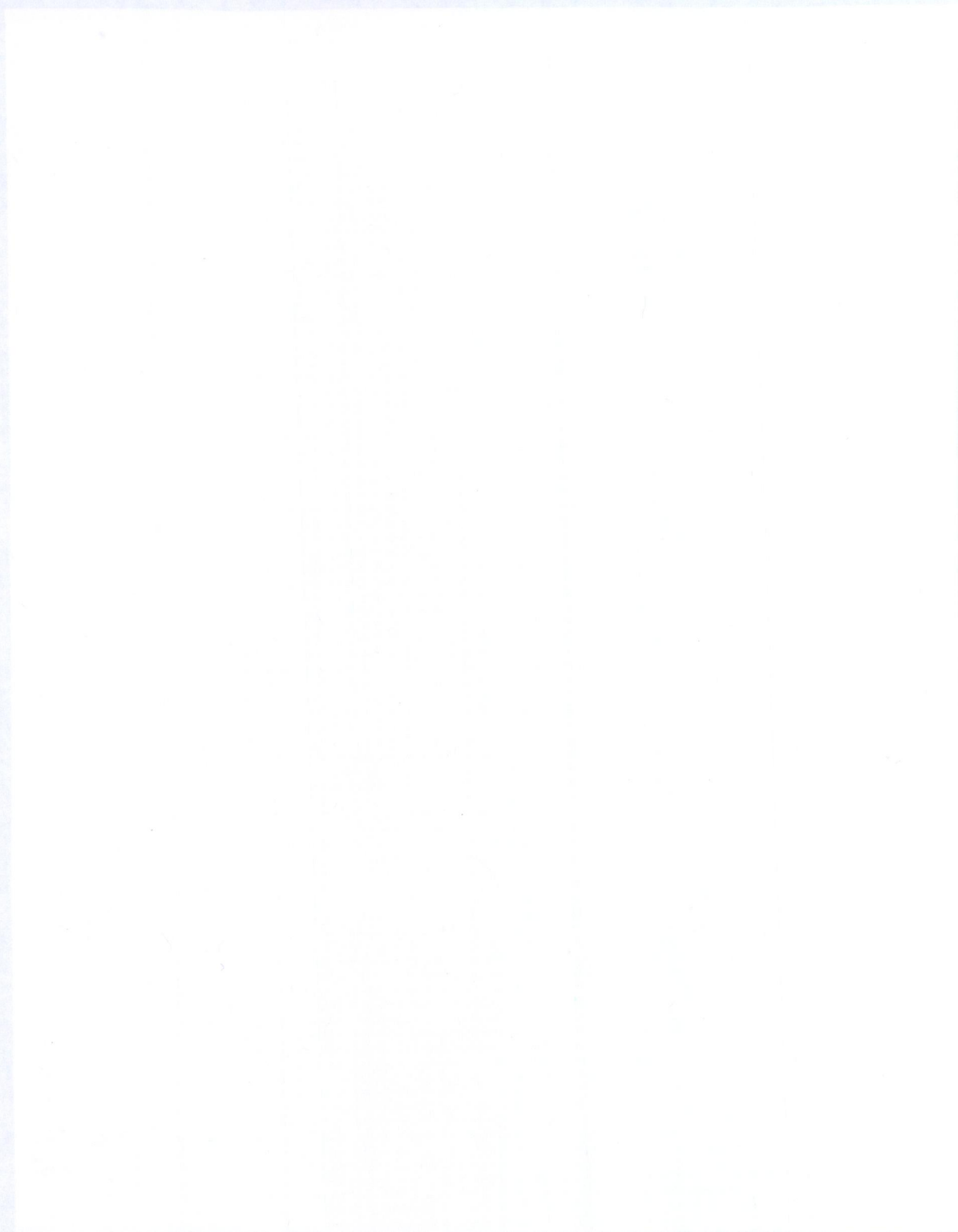














viewer walks around the basin of water, the light reflected from the opening changes from the greenery to blue sky to the overall dim light of the Grotto. As this is the space with the smallest opening, sound is contained and the trickle of water and the echoing footsteps adds to the general atmosphere.

" I do want a direct experience to speak about it  
in a direct language without any hidden meaning"(15)

The exit leads out to the waterfall garden(Plate 28) and consequently back to the shores of the lake.

" There is a little melancholy, a sadness at leaving this paradise behind. Timeless impressions of a world known and yet unknown, go hand in hand with the fleeting experience of light and space inside the chambers. They give reality to the artist's dream that in tending the heavens, the spaces embedded in the ground unite earth and sky in their windows onto the firmament, and at such moments it is as though the heavens stooped down to kiss the Irish soil"(16)



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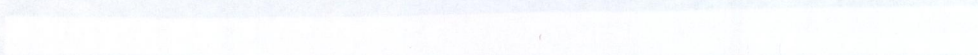


Plate 28 : Liss Ard Foundation : Waterfall Garden, Liss Ard, (1994)



Plate 29 : Turrell, James : Entrance to the Sky Garden, Liss Ard, (1994)







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## *CHAPTER FOUR : The Gardens of Light - An Exterior perspective*

Turrell has a wonderful love of the Japanese garden. He first visited a Japanese garden at Izuma. He happened to view this garden through a small window at eye level, The size of the window scaled down the view of his surrounds.

"The small rocks appeared as mountains, blades of grass became wooded hillsides and the bonsai looked like large trees, the microcosm had become a macrocosm"(1)

At the entrance to the Sky Garden , Turrell uses the stone doorway to frame the landscape and scale down the size of the view.( Plate 29).

Turrell loves the gardens where the hand of man is not apparent, where one has no idea where the garden begins or ends. The Japanese through the art of Bonseki ( the art of garden stones) and through other forms of visual poetry expressed in the garden, can see the Universe in a stone.

"Of all the gardens in the Japanese culture the kind that I like very much is the kind where you do not see the hand of man. This is where the ego of the artist begins to dissolve into the grand scale of things and there is no signature. This is the kind of effort I am seeking with Roden Crater- a piece that does not end" ( 2)

It might seem like a stretch of the imagination to consider the Roden Crater as a garden, but consider how the landscaped gardens of the Renaissance and of later periods were involved with line and drawing the viewers eye's around the spaces in the garden, which is exactly what Turrell is doing with the sky,

"..the crater might be seen as no less a planned and engineered 'garden work of art' than Le Notres seventeenth century garden at Vaux-le-Vicomte, in France with it's vistas framed by parterres giving the illusion of extending to infinity and the and the flat reductive geometry of the plantings that draws the visitor forward into a space in which the sky has as great a role as the land," (3)

Andre le Nôtre was the royal gardener to Louis XIV from 1637 to 1700. His plans and designs for Vaux-le-Vicomte(Plates 30 & 31) were taken from formulas devised by his predecessors, but he had the talent and ability to apply it on a regal scale.If one views Turrell's work in the form of a garden then it links his work firmly to a strong tradition of culturing the land, yet he cultivates it in a more subtle way. Turrell is more interested in containing and tending the sky, making the viewer more aware of his surroundings.







" One of the difficulties of using light is that there isn't yet a tradition of using it in our culture. I was interested in using light as a material. Light in the space itself and the qualities of space-making light without traditional, physical form. There is a rich tradition in painting of work about light, but it is not light, it is the record of seeing." (4)

The Irish Sky Garden is primarily to be considered as a garden. Although Turrell is primarily concerned with landscaping the sky, he is in turn using the concept of a garden practically.

The term 'garden' is used in the sense of a landscape garden, a garden produced for aesthetic as well as utilitarian ends for human use and enjoyment. Gardens as a form of art reached a whole new concept during the Renaissance in Italy in the 15th century, when the constructions of gardens were involved in proportion, symmetry, balance, light and shade. The garden became an area to display art with sculpture, fountains and terraces.

" Human aesthetic experience was suddenly and rewardingly enlarged: not by the senses alone, through colour, scent, light and shade, but also by intellectual qualities of form, proportion symmetry, blending by design into a splendid harmony."(5)

The garden in essence became the frontier where man and nature met.

The Irish Sky Garden is comparable to an Italian Baroque Garden with its use of a grotto. A grotto was very popular as decorative feature in 18th century European gardens. These were often quite elaborate with arrangements of rocks and shells and other objects and were usually associated with water. The grotto in the Sky Garden is left very natural in its form, so the viewer is not distracted with ornamentation but is left strictly with his own personal experience.

### *The past and the light*

The connection between Carraig Fada and Liss Ard is made very consciously by Turrell in his bid to "give something back to the people of the area. Carraig Fada formed a basic point of reference to prehistoric cultures, All the lisses of the region focus on this peak."(6)

By establishing this link, Turrell is making an effort to reunite present day man with his predecessors, to bring them through a journey of light and space. This experience of light that is so new to our generation can be traced back to prehistoric man in Ireland in the construction of their passage graves. These ancient structures were built in specific settings to



"That of the nobility of being light is that their art is a  
creation of using it in our culture. I was interested in using  
light as a material, light in the space itself and the quality of  
space-making light within traditional physical form. There is  
a rich tradition in painting of work about light, but it is not light  
it is the record of seeing." (4)

The Irish garden is generally to be considered as a garden. Although  
it is a garden, it is not a garden in the sense of a garden. It is a garden  
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The garden in Ireland became the garden of the man and his art.  
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its garden, its garden was very popular as a decorative feature in 18th  
century European gardens. These were often quite elaborate with  
ornaments of rock and shell and other objects and were usually  
associated with water. The garden in the Irish garden is not very natural in  
its form, so the water is not restricted with ornamentation but is left  
nearly with an ornamental structure.

## The past and the light

The connection between Clontarf Park and the Irish garden is  
continuously by the Irish in his bid to "give something back to the people of  
the Irish garden. The Irish garden is a basic point of reference to traditional  
culture. All the lines of the garden focus on this point." (6)

In establishing the Irish garden is making an effort to create a garden  
man with his garden, to bring them through a journey of light and  
space. This experience of light that is so new to the garden can be  
reached back to traditional man in Ireland in the construction of their  
garden. These garden structures were built in specific settings to



make the best use of natural light and particular land forms. Their construction was usually linked to astronomical events and ritual concerns. The Irish Sky Garden is specifically designed to follow the lie of the land and also makes use of pre-existing land forms. This is another link with the passage graves of early Ireland.

Although Newgrange was discovered in 1699, it is only in the last thirty years that it has been proven and accepted by archaeologists, that primitive man constructed these chambers for more than burial sites. These graves - Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth- were all built with their chambers aligned to accept the sun into their passages on various days of the year, namely solstices and equinoxes. In 1980 Martin Brennan and Jack Roberts launched an investigation into the significance of the passage graves of Ireland. They began by using Loughcrew, an area with a wealth of passage graves about 40 miles from the Boyne Valley. Cairn T or the Tomb of Ollamh Fodhla is the principal cairn on the hill of Sliabh-na-Callighe, (Plate 32) part of Loughcrew. The interesting feature of this Cairn is its similarity to that of James Turrell's mound. There is a huge carved stone chair in the inside chamber, known as the Hag's chair or the Seat of Ollamh Fodhla. This tomb is regarded by George Coffey in his book New Grange- and other incised tumuli in Ireland to have evidence of a strong solar cult (7). The tomb is decorated with concentric circles, cup marks and other ornamentation. In 1980, Brennan and Roberts proved that the marks were not decorative as previously considered, but were there for a purpose. On the 17th of March, three days before the spring equinox, Brennan and Roberts observed the light entering the chamber of Cairn T. (The sun enters the chamber for about four days before and after the equinox.)

"Here.. the light assumed a clearly defined geometric shape that was projected onto the upright backstone (Plate 33) and moved diagonally across it, tracing the path of the sun against a mural of prehistoric art.... suddenly markings that appeared to random and haphazard became part of an intricately structured system that derived its meaning from the solar event we were just witnessing." (8)

This is just one isolated incident where we have caught a glimpse of how much our predecessors actually knew about the heavens and what they held. I find it quite unfathomable how they constructed these graves in



make the best use of natural light and partition land forms. Their construction was usually linked to astronomical events and ritual concerns. The high bar chamber is especially designed to follow the lie of the land and also makes use of pre-existing land forms. This is another link with the passage graves of early Ireland.

Although Newgrange was discovered in 1692, it is only in the last thirty years that it has been given and accepted by archaeologists. The massive masonry construction of the chamber for more than 2000 years. These graves - Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth - were all built with their chambers designed to accept the sun into their passages on various days of the year, mainly solstices and equinoxes. In 1980 Martin Brennan and Jack Roberts launched an investigation into the significance of the passage graves of Ireland. They began by using a computer, an area with a wealth of passage graves about 40 miles from the Boyne Valley. Cairn 1 or the Tomb of Ollamh Fobhair is the principal cairn on the hill of Slane. (Plate 33) part of a passage. The interesting feature of this Cairn is its similarity to that of James' Tomb. There is a large carved stone chair in the north chamber, known as the Hall's chair or the Seat of Ollamh Fobhair. The tomb is regarded by George Coffey in his book *New Grange and other prehistoric monuments in Ireland* to have evidence of a strong solar cult (7). The tomb is decorated with concentric circles, spirals and other ornamentation. In 1940 Brennan and Roberts proved that the masonry was not decorative as previously considered, but were there for a purpose. On the 17th of March, three days before the spring equinox, Brennan and Roberts observed the light entering the chamber of Cairn 1. (The sun enters the chamber for about four days before and after the equinox.)

"When the light entered a clearly defined geometric shape that was projected onto the upright masonry (Plate 33) and moved diagonally across it, tracing the path of the sun against a mural of prehistoric art. Suddenly markings that appeared to random and haphazard became part of an intricately structured system that showed its meaning from the solar event we were just witnessing." (8)

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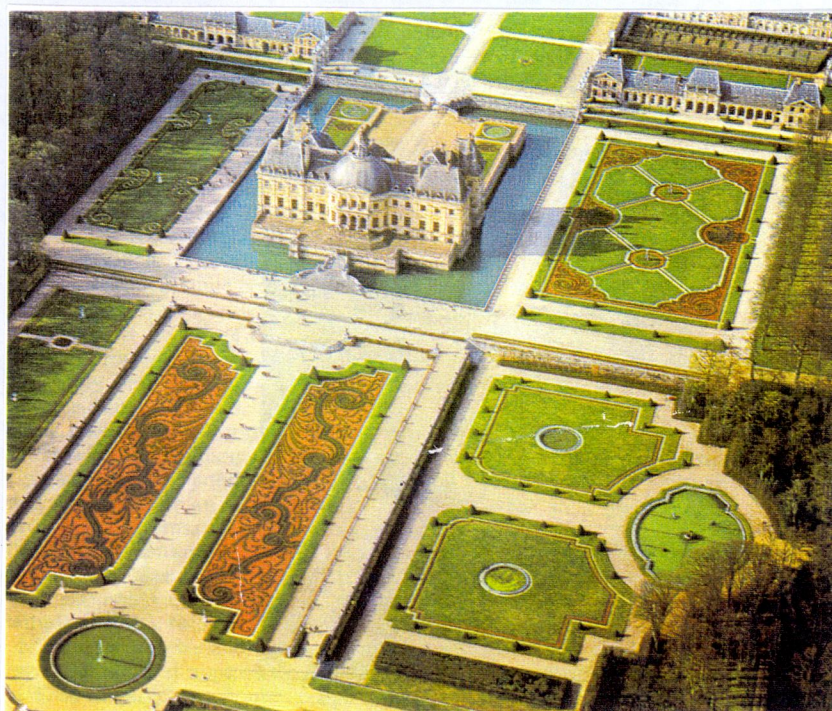
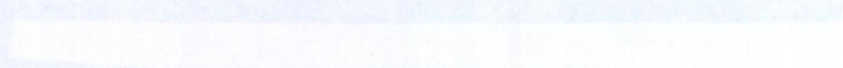
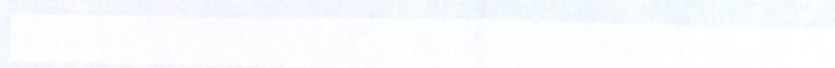
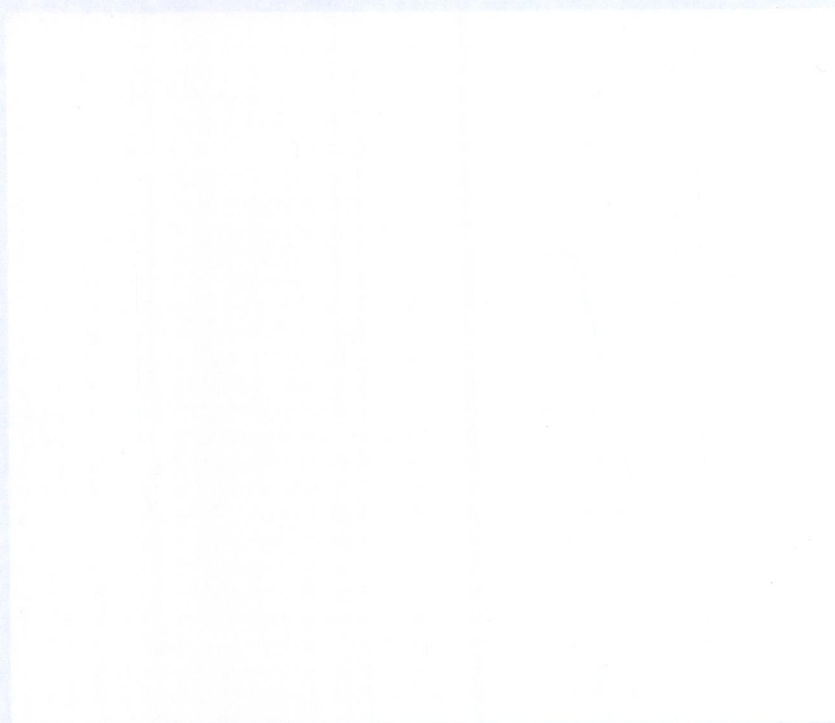


Plate 30 : Andre le Notre : Vaux-le-Vicomte, France, (1976)



Plate 31 : Andre le Notre : Vaux-le-Vicomte, France, (1976)







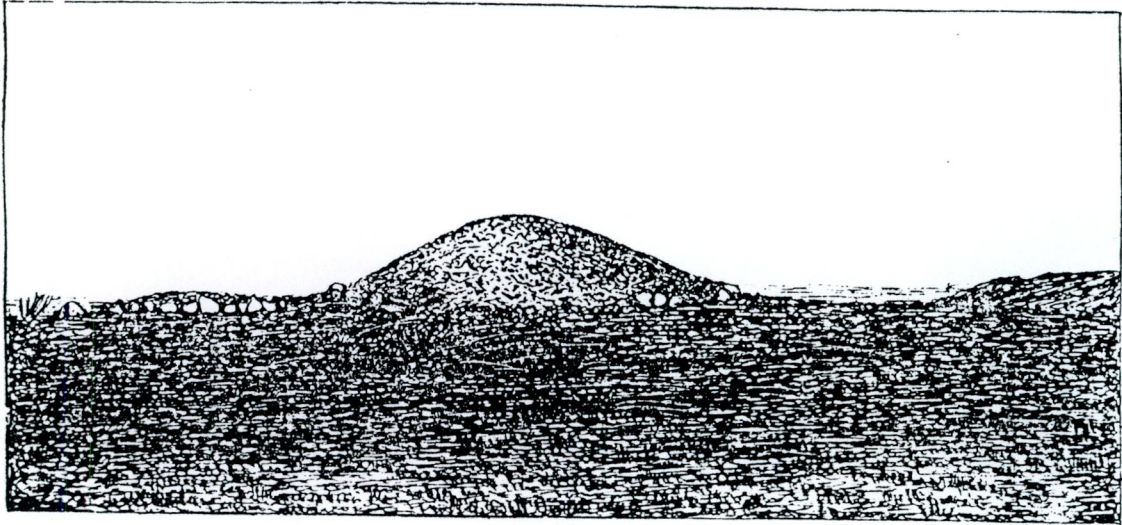
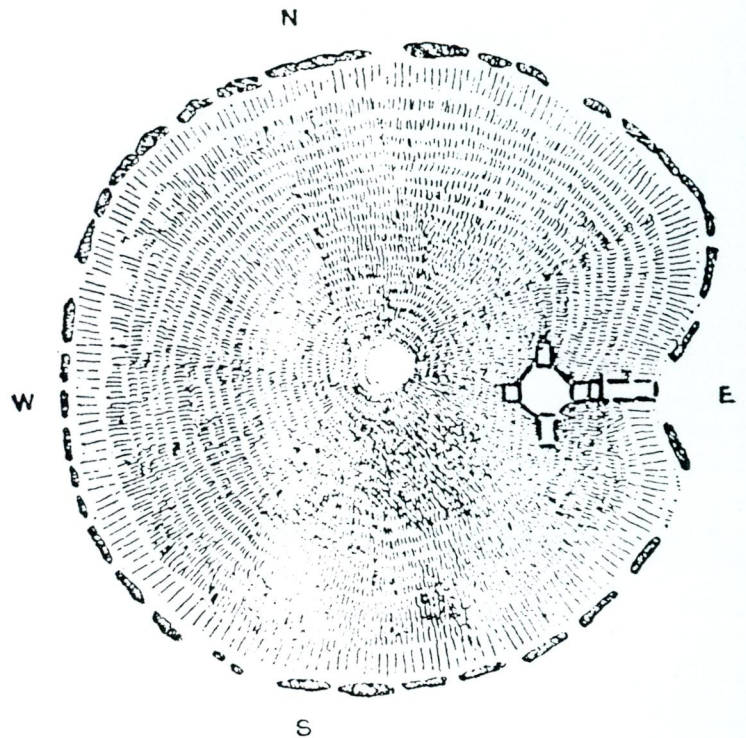
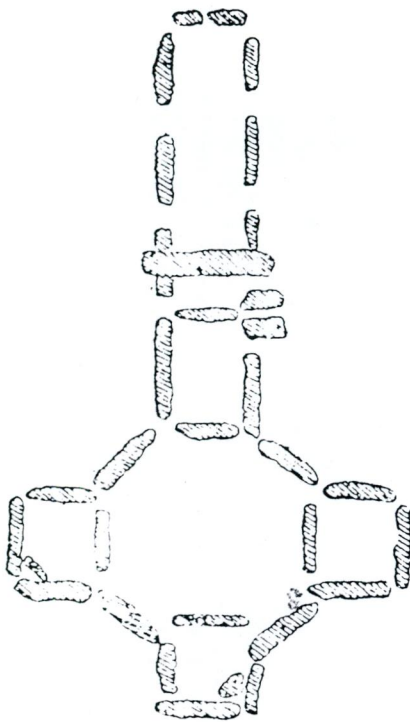


Fig 69 Cairn T





# GOLDEN SECRETS OF OUR HISTORY



The shape of the beam-sundial as it moved across the passage at Cairn T.

By GERARD O'REGAN

**STARTLING** new evidence, produced last night, shows that, 3,000 years before Christ, the Irish had a more advanced civilisation than has been previously thought.

And it may well be that in some areas we were even more advanced than the Egyptians and predated the achievements of the Romans.

An American born expert on rock inscriptions last night suggested that the attached photograph shows that when it came to the "know-how" then required for astronomy and calendar making, the Irish were in fact way ahead of their time.



Martin Brennan and Jack Roberts, who made the sundial discovery.

"This is going to shatter a lot of the previously held beliefs about the state of Irish civilisation at that time," claimed Mr. Martin Brennan, who was born in New York of Irish parents but who has lived in this country for the past 10 years.

He has written a number of books on archaeology and related topics and his latest book, "The Brehon Laws," which details the importance of the various ancient monuments in this area, is due to be published next month.

Mr. Brennan says that the inscription on the photograph was found by stone art carvers at Cairn T, a prehistoric site, while determining the passage of time and the different seasons of the year.

The inscription was photographed yesterday by the Irish legation in New York and it can be seen the subject which has been brought up in the mind was gradually moved from through one of the stones which are believed to represent the sun.

Mr. Brennan said that in the past the Irish had used a method of measuring time by the position of the sun in the sky. This method was used in the past and it was found that the Irish had used a method of measuring time by the position of the sun in the sky.

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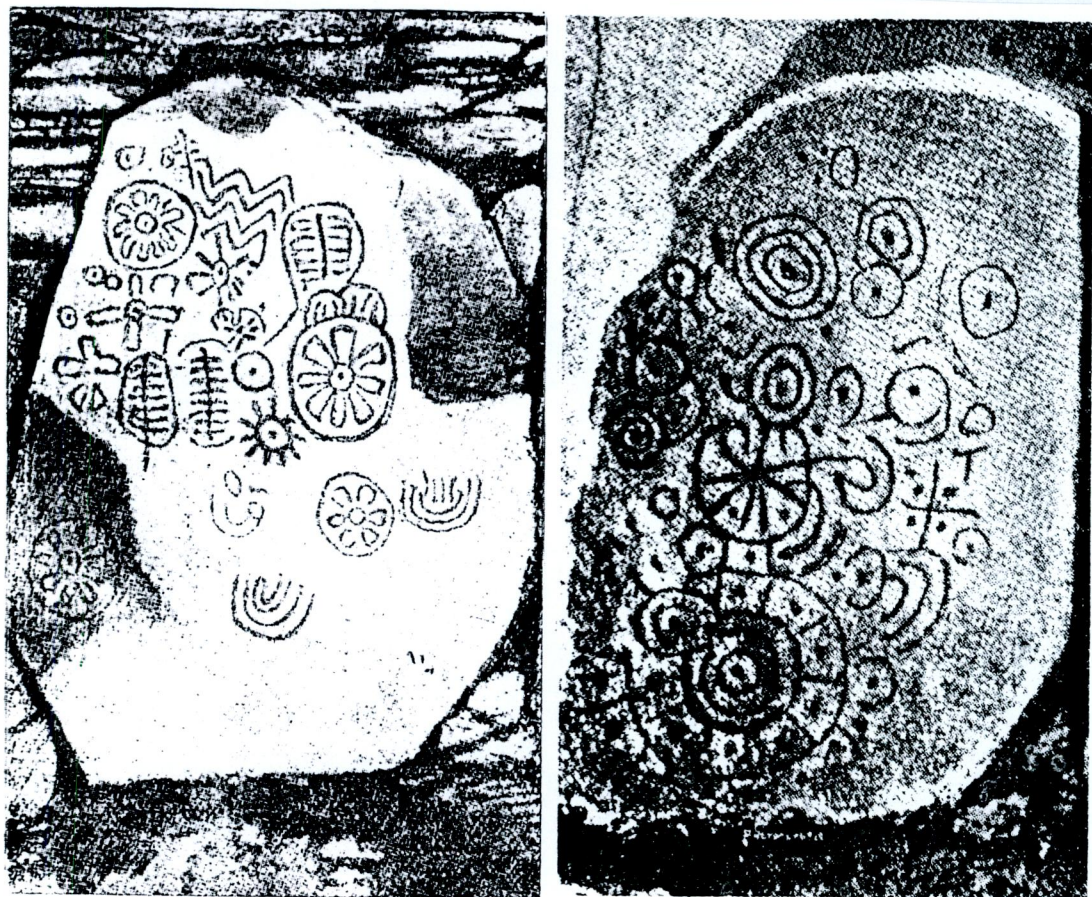
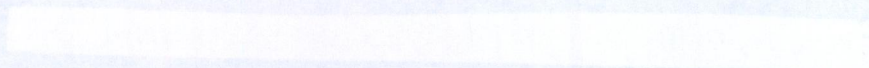


Plate 33 : Coffey, George : Plan of Backstone, Loughcrew, (1977)







their sheer size alone, but when one considers the amount of time observing the heavens and the earth in order to align these structures, one has to acknowledge the superiority of pre-history man in his affinity with his environment. The majestic sense of awe on entering one of these passage graves when one marvels at the feats of pre-historic man, is repeated in a similar sense when one enters one of Turrell's spaces. It is an art that has been described as "intensely spiritual and achingly beautiful"(9). Turrell's spaces opening to the heavens have been symbolically related to that of entering a church or a large cathedral; because of this his work has been referred to as "The Cathedral of the Skies"(10). But Turrell, like Harvey and Ackroyd, does not want his work to be seen to have religious connotations.

"When you enter a cathedral the experience of light and space is more likely to engender awe than any rhetoric spoken by the priesthood."(11)

But it can be quite hard to disassociate this experience of light from religion.

"Reflections on life and death, on God and the universe are never very far from one's thoughts in front of a work by Turrell. He is often compared to the architects of the Gothic cathedrals, who symbolised the immanence of God by means of the light and space that poured through and around their buildings."(12)

Again, the fact that the viewer must travel to see the piece gives a sense of pilgrimage to the work. Both the Roden Crater and the Irish Sky Garden, are quite isolated and one would need a car or some means of transport to get to these pieces.

Turrell's use of light is a unique way of looking at the world around us. The roots of his work are in the past and I think his pieces help give a stronger awareness of our own environment. Turrell is lifting the wool from our eyes and showing us what seems to be a contemporary way of looking at the heavens. We are only repeating what pre-historic man did in his own unique way.



their sheer size alone, but when one considers the amount of time it takes to traverse the heavens and the earth in order to align these structures, one has to acknowledge the superiority of presiding over in his ability with his command. The simplest sense of two or entering one of these passage, however, when one arrives at the limits of the historic man is repeated in a similar sense when one enters one of Turrell's spaces. It is an art that has been described as "intensely spiritual and archaic" (10). Turrell's spaces, opening to the heavens have been symbolically related to that of entering a church or a large cathedral; because of this his work has been referred to as "The Cathedral of the Sky" (11). But Turrell, like Harvey and Aalto, does not want his work to be seen to have religious connotations.

"When you enter a cathedral the experience of light and space is more likely to suggest awe than any theories spoken by the architect" (11).

But it can be quite hard to dissociate this experience of light from religion.

"Reflections on life and death, on God and the universe are never very far from one's thoughts in front of a work by Turrell. It is often compared to the sanctuaries of the Gothic cathedrals, who symbolized the immensity of God by means of the light and space that poured through and around their buildings" (12).

Again, the fact that the viewer must travel to see the piece gives a sense of pilgrimage to the work. Both the *Light Piece* and the *High Sky Cathedral* are quite isolated and one would need a car or some means of transport to get to these pieces.

Turrell's use of light is a religious way of looking at the world around us. The results of his work are in the past and I think his piece helps give a stronger awareness of our own environment. Turrell is lifting the wool from our eyes and showing us what seems to be a contemporary way of looking at the heavens. We are only repeating what the historic man did in his own unique way.



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## Conclusion

"The old is not just a piece of history or even just part of a continuum, it is a necessary component. And that means that it is essential to the idea of the environment as one composed of the past as well as the present and the future." (1)

The work of Harvey and Ackroyd, and James Turrell, reflects the above statement. The past is recognised as an integral part of their work to produce solid and convincing pieces. The light used in their work can be regarded as the sacred light of past generations. It is showing us the way forward by reuniting us with some of the knowledge of the prehistorical world, of simple perception, unclouded by an age of technology. A world lost to generations, is rekindled in Forcefield and An Irish Sky Garden. The common feature of the garden used in both pieces is something even today's man can relate to. He may not know of the wonderful gardens at Vaux-le-Vicomte or the passage graves at Newgrange but the experience of light, growth, the journey, and elements of time and change can awaken a feeling of unity with his environment through these works. This work is not the solution to the desecration of the earth or the destruction of our eco-system but it is a vessel to train man's thought to perceive and look at his earth and perhaps even understand his world in a different manner.



## Conclusion

This is not just a piece of history or even just part  
of a monument, it is a necessary component. And that  
means that it is essential to the idea of the monument as  
an approach of the past as well as the present and the  
future. (1)

The work of Harvey and Ackroyd, and James Powell, reflects the  
the statement. The past is recognized as an inherent part of their work  
to produce solid and convincing pieces. The light used in their work was  
highlighted as the secret light of past generations. It is showing us the way  
forward by reminding us with some of the knowledge of the prehistoric  
world of simple perception, unclouded by an age of technology. A world  
lost to generations is revealed in *Unearthed* and *Archaeology*. The  
common feature of the garden used in both pieces is something even  
today's man can relate to. The very first part of the wonderful garden in  
*Unearthed* is the passage from the passage from the passage, but the experience  
of light gives the journey, and elements of time and change are woven  
a feeling of unity with his environment through these works. The work is  
not the solution to the destruction of the earth or the destruction of our  
ecosystem but it is a way to train man's thought to perceive and look at  
the earth and nature even understand his world in a different manner.



*References and Notes : Conclusion.*

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