

The Latest James Turrell Masterpiece Is in the Middle of Nowhere

A tiny Colorado mountain town is about to become the starriest art mecca of summer.

BY LEENA KIM

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The Louis Vuitton store in Las Vegas. MoMA PS1. The [Crystal Bridges Museum](#) of American Art. England's [Houghton Hall](#). James Turrell is certainly no stranger to high profile art commissions. But that isn't to say the prolific 79-year-old artist is an elitist.

This summer a small mountain town will become the latest locale to be blessed with the contemporary maestro's magical (read: [highly Instagrammable](#)) touch. For three years he has been working on a new Skyspace in Green Mountain Falls, a scenic community of 650 people 90 minutes from Denver. When it is unveiled on June 18, it will be the first of Turrell's Skyspace series to have been built into the side of a mountain. And it can be reached only via a half-mile hike.

Given the artist's lifelong fascination with light, space, and what lies beyond Earth's atmosphere, and Green Mountain Falls' remote setting, it didn't take much convincing for him to accept the project. "I was excited to work with the deeper blue of the high altitude Rocky Mountain sky," Turrell tells *T&C*.



The new James Turrell Skyspace in Green Mountain Falls, Colorado, is built into the side of a mountain—and can only be reached on foot.

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The real question, though, is whether the town is ready for the inevitable influx of tourists and art lovers in search of their next geotag brag. It's something that has been carefully considered by the man behind the commission: philanthropist and art collector Christian Keese, whose family has been summering in Green Mountain Falls since the 1890s.

Thirteen years ago, with his partner, the choreographer Larry Keigwin, Keese co-founded the town's annual **Green Box Arts Festival**. The reason was simple. "There just was so little to do, particularly for a young person," he says. "It started in an extremely modest way." The Turrell Skyspace is the festival's biggest coup to date. Though it surely won't be the last, Keese is mindful not to get carried away. "Contemporary art has gotten so sensational these days. It's over-the-top," he says. "Our idea is to slowly, thoughtfully, and methodically add experiences. We have to be cautious of the environment, of the wildlife, of the townspeople. That's a delicate balance."

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