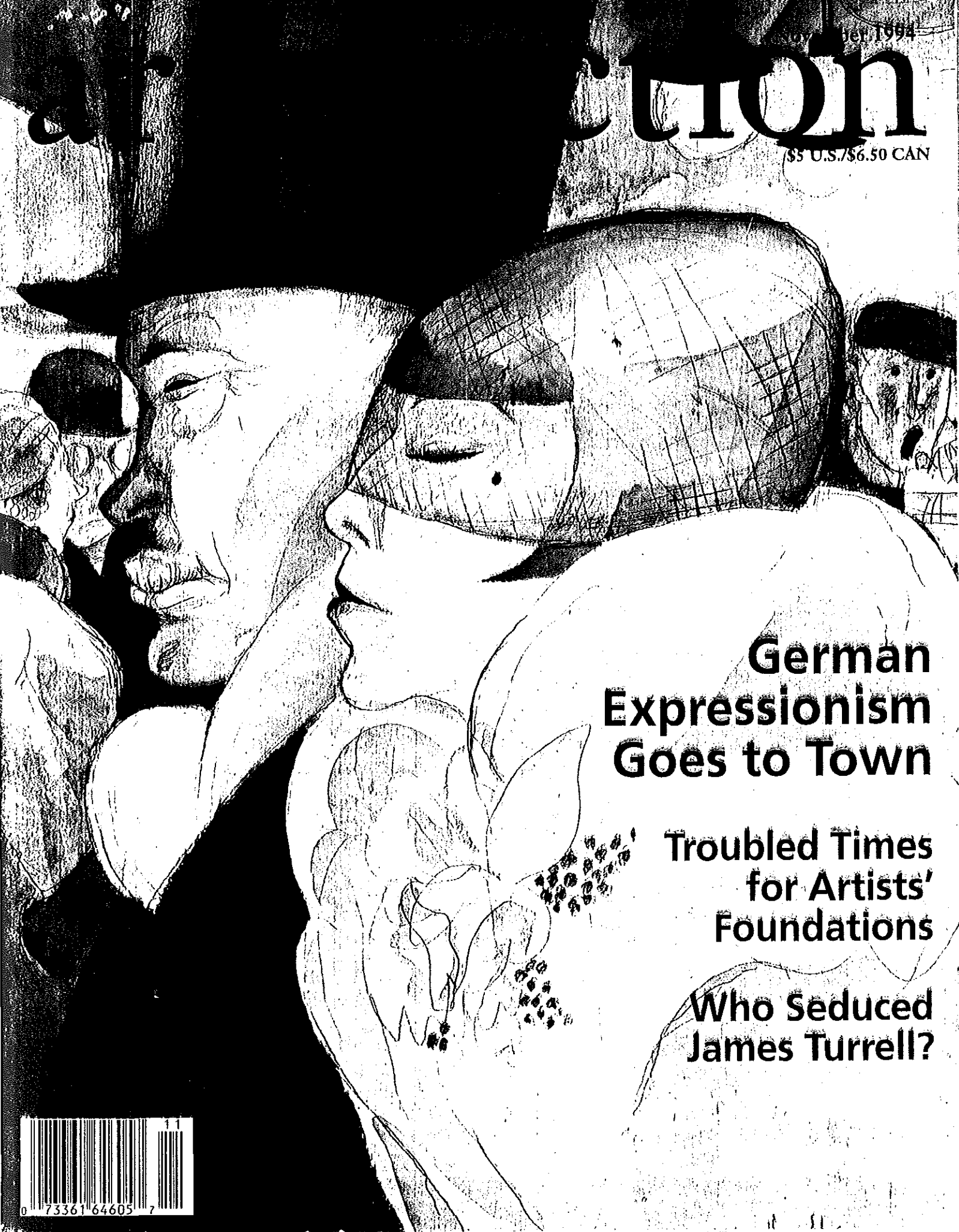


October 1994

# Artforum

\$5 U.S./\$6.50 CAN



## German Expressionism Goes to Town

Troubled Times for Artists' Foundations

Who Seduced James Turrell?



Cover: *Beyond fashion: From Ernst Ludwig Kirchner's slashing lines to Jeanne Mammen's icy Weimar elegance, German Expressionism has withstood the art market's shifting vogues. Here, Mammen's 1929 Feine Welt (People of Fashion), courtesy of The Galerie St. Etienne, New York. See page 136.*

**in the air**

20

**around the block**

28

Special Report: are the Feds playing "cowboy"?; Mitchell-Innes to leave Sotheby's; MCA wins Elliott bequest; Corral ousted at Reina Sofia; does vetting "restrain trade"?; outcry over transsexual *libertador*; English Heritage takes on Time-Life; and more

**figures in the landscape**

Anthony Haden-Guest

58

**talk of the trade**

John Hobbs and Ariane Dandois join forces; westward ho; Odernott and Cazeau go their separate ways; Keno: "right in the center of things"; Dolan/Maxwell's Irish gig; and more

64

**in the galleries**

Boulet de Monvel at Barry Friedman; Blondeau mounts LeWitt retrospective; W.M. Chase at Spanierman; Barye's kingdom at Wildenstein; Jay DeFeo at Kohn Turner; Barry Flonogon at Richard Gray

88

**critical edge**

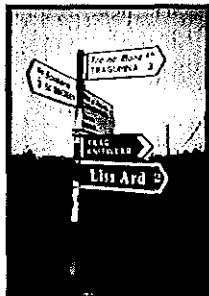
Social Studies  
Dan Cameron

100

**souren melikian**

Seeking Greener Pastures

114



112



146

**auction reviews**

156

**this month**

Auctions, foirs, museums, events

158

**calendar**

November sales and exhibitions

164

**photography credits**

186

**classifieds**

188

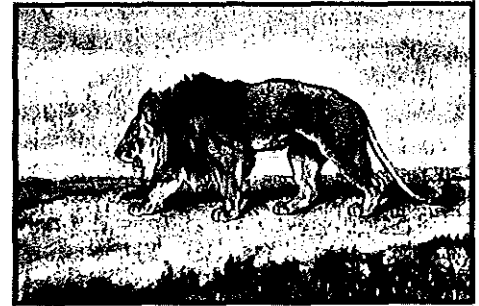
**editorial**

Sympathy for the Devil?

192



114



90

**Sturm und Strong**

Though raw, powerful and anything but decorative, German Expressionism is one of the most solid segments of the 20th-century art market. *Andrew Decker*

136

**Building Gardens in the Sky**

Dealer Veith Turske and artist James Turrell had a vision: the Irish Sky Garden. But with bankruptcy, entangled lovers, a suicide and recommitments all around, things have come down to earth with a thud. *Nicholas Fox Weber*

142

**Vouslez-Vous Coucher?**

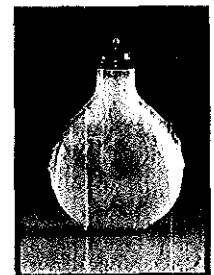
Whether used for amorous dalliance, holding court or writing a great novel, French beds are often as spectacular as their famous occupants. *Amy Page*

146

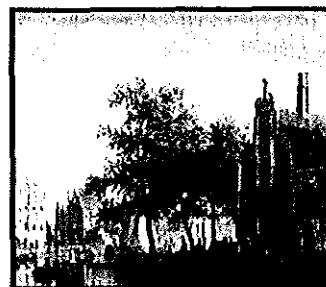
**Solid Foundations...**

and some shaky ones. A string of controversies has focused attention—not all of it welcome—on artist-funded charities. Still, their numbers keep growing. *Judd Tully*

152



160



156

# Building Gardens in the Sky

The Irish Sky Garden was not what I expected to find less than a mile from a market town in West Cork. Skibbereen, population 3,000, is known for its weekly cattle auctions and its Friday market days featuring homemade currant scones and local blackberry jams. That it should be the focal point of a major art-world scandal, involving a high-living German dealer named Veith (pronounced "fight") Turske, the American light-and-space artist James Turrell and Turske's roster of ambitious avant-garde artists, was almost inconceivable.

When I made that first visit in September 1992 to Liss Ard, Turske's estate, I was naive enough to think that the singular goal of Turrell's Sky

Garden there was exalted, imaginative art. Turrell's structures in the landscape—not quite earthworks, not quite sculpture, more a blend of spaceships and follies—were presented as being in concord with their splendid natural environment and as honoring the local ecology. I believed the idea put forth by Turske and his living companion and work partner, Claudia Meister, that its construction, and the tourism it would attract, would give a desperately needed economic lift to the surrounding community. The creators and developers of the Irish Sky Garden appeared as earnest and idealistic as they were ardent, not hell-bent on personal gain.

In the two years since that visit, tales of bankruptcy, entangled



*Dealer Veith Turske and artist James Turrell had a vision: the Irish Sky Garden. But with bankruptcy, entangled lovers, a suicide and recriminations all around, things have come down to earth with a thud*

*by  
Nicholas Fox Weber*

*Content, prosperous—and a bit smug: the dapper Turske (left) and sportier Turrell behind the dealer's grand house, in happier days.*

lovers, a complex web of offshore companies and a banker's suicide have swirled around Turske. Yet not long ago Turske was welcomed almost anywhere he went. Officers at prestigious Swiss financial institutions were eager to lend him money. Important avant-garde artists were pleased to be represented by him. Collectors bought millions of dollars' worth of art from him. Foundation directors eagerly supported his activities.

And while Turrell, "the artist of light," seemed to be concerned with only the purest spiritual values, it would soon come out that he too was embroiled in a rather more earthbound scenario here. I would learn that Turrell had accepted Turske's invitation to Ireland not just because the dealer offered the artist, whom he had met in Arizona in 1989, a chance to undertake a major new project, but also because Turske dangled significant material gain before him. Turske promised to help Turrell acquire his own magical island off the Irish coast—by working out an elaborate deal for buying real estate through an offshore company and using art as collateral for a loan. Turrell has said

that his problems with Turske were so grave as to undermine his ability to work, but he concedes that he got into this position largely because he found Turske and his grandiose schemes irresistible.

THAT DAY OF MY INITIAL VISIT TO LISS ARD, I APPROACHED via a long, winding driveway, past immaculately pruned trees and shrubbery. A Range Rover and a couple of other expensive European cars were parked in front of the sprawling stable wing of a huge cream-colored, 19th-century country house. The steps onto the lawns had as many landings and balustrades as an opera house. The Irish Sky Garden was being planned behind it in a 10-acre space owned by the nonprofit Liss Ard Foundation, which Turske, his ex-wife and five other directors had set up in 1990.

In a part of the world where even the most urbane visitors are likely to be found in old fisherman's sweaters and muddy blue jeans, Turske sports landed-gentry attire. He received me in elegant riding clothes and then went off to change into a well tailored houndstooth-check hacking jacket. His thick, dark hair, carefully cut, was swept back off his forehead, his mustache shaped so as to be bold, but not shaggy.

Downstairs, in the starkly contemporary offices of the Liss Ard Foundation, I met Meister. She had a soft, porcelain complexion, delicate features and a wide smile. More understated than Turske, she wore tailored pants, a blouse and a shooting jacket that were a careful juxtaposition of silk, tweed and velvet.

Before going outside to view the grounds, we put on Wellingtons. We needed them. Still in the early stages of construction, the Irish Sky Garden was at this point a series of muddy paths and building sites. But Turske and Meister pointed here and there as if the project were complete and the cognoscenti of the art world were already flocking to it. They said that this scheme would result in a new perception of light. If Turrell was the project's designer, Turske was now clearly its developer, proprietor and chief advocate.

Turske exudes energy and awareness. Most of the time, his lively eyes meet yours entirely. He is determined to electrify your passions. He makes connections, except for those occasional moments when he seems furtive, as if he knows some impenetrable secret. His explanation of the Sky Garden, although confusing to follow, was utterly arresting.

Turrell's work, Turske and Meister alternately explained, would consist of five major sites linked by a sequence of paths and tunnels. There would be an elliptical crater and a mound from which to view the sky unim-

peded. Light, natural and artificial, was the pivotal element. The tightly regulated program sounded as deliberate and controlling as the rules of a religious cult—both what could and could not be seen had been carefully predetermined—but it promised considerable spiritual uplift.

The project was going well, they said, with support money from the Liss Ard Foundation's lifetime members and a substantial grant from the Irish government. Meister told me they were figuring on a total cost of about \$4.5 million, and she seemed optimistic about getting it.

But then, oddly, Turske began to speak with reservations about James Turrell. The artist was not very sympathetic to the environment, the dealer said, with a look of sadness. Turske said that one of his paramount goals at Liss Ard was the maintenance of the fragile local ecosystem—for which Turrell had no regard. Turske said that Turrell owned an island about a mile off the coast of Cork, and that the artist—an avid pilot who does much of his thinking from above—had recently destroyed a lot of the natural habitat there by putting in a landing field.

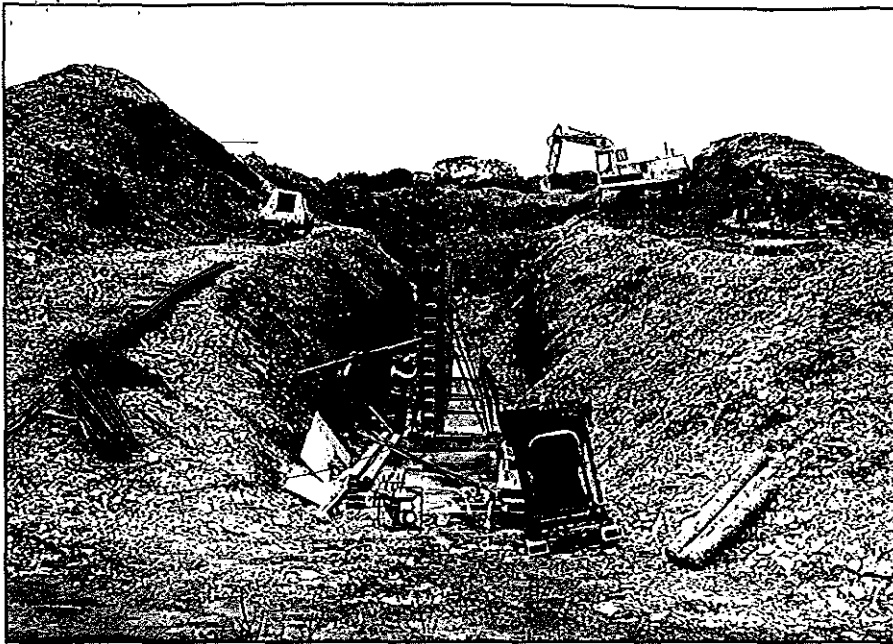
Yet in spite of these shortcomings, Turske told me

“During the day, Veith discussed our marriage problems with my husband, and at night with me. And I thought, ‘This man—he has the power to help me.’...He seduces people. He enthuses you. It opens up a vibrating world.”

—Irène Preiswerk, Veith Turske's ex-wife

that he was so happy in Ireland that he had given up Turske & Turske, the gallery he had had in Zurich for a number of years, and had dropped most of the artists he had represented there. Now his main goal in life was to fulfill Turrell's dream of “gardening or tending the sky.”

BUT TWO MONTHS AFTER MY VISIT, THE NOVEMBER 12 edition of the weekly Swiss tabloid *Züri Woche* announced that Turske & Turske had filed for bankruptcy. Turske's picture appeared over a caption that read, “What remains is seediness.” His backers and associates, the article said, had incurred substantial losses. His artists were “choked by the grip of financial scandal” that threatened both their work and their reputations. The article also reported that Turrell, along with the Swiss painter and printmaker Franz Gertsch and the Polish sculptor Magdalena Abakanowicz, had written a public statement declaring, “Veith Turske has broken our trust, and we feel betrayed by him.” *Züri Woche* labeling Turske a “Schönredner und Träumtanzer,” (a sweet-talker and dream-dancer), said that in spite of this Turske and Meister were living well in Ireland and



still developing Turrell's Sky Garden, but that Turrell and the English landscape designer Michael Hayes, who had been with the Irish Sky Garden from its inception, had withdrawn from the project.

A week later, *Zitri Woche* called the Turske affair an "art scandal of universal proportion." Charging that his gallery was "nothing but a front, the showcase for the ingenious hot-air merchant," the tabloid alleged Turske's connection to worthless art certificates, valueless bonds and a tangle of offshore companies. The article linked the dealer with the suicide the previous April of Georges Hertach, a bank director in Zurich who had made him loans. One Swiss bank that had lent money to Turske was reportedly down about \$3.5 million, another \$2.8 million. The total losses were said to be in the "dozens of millions of francs," and all that was left at the gallery was about \$7,000 worth of used office furniture and, parked outside, a delivery van. The scandal, the paper noted, involved important collectors, such as the Swiss mineral-water magnate Donald Hess. Turske's ex-wife, Irène Preiswerk, was also called a victim—she had been used by her German husband for her Swiss citizenship and deceived about guarantees she had made. The article featured a large photograph of Turske, dapper in coat and tie, and a sportier Turrell in his sweater, sitting in English garden armchairs behind the enormous Irish house. The artist and the dealer both looked content and prosperous—and a bit smug.

The Swiss art world is full of stories about Turske. There are tales about his lavish lifestyle and the splendor of his wardrobe, considered especially remarkable because of his background. The distinguished Zurich art historian Willy Rotzler spoke to me about Turske with the bemused admiration one might feel for a great fictional charlatan. "Everything he did looked perfect from the outside. He had a thing for high quality. He once told my

*There has been a flurry of activity at Liss Ard in recent months. "I have really proved with the development of the project that we will do it," claims Turske.*

wife, who ran the Gimpel & Hanover gallery in Zurich for 22 years. "Life is too short, so I never wear anything but silk." But silk had not always been

Turske's prerogative. The son of an embittered soldier who had lost a leg in the First World War, the future lover of luxury, born in 1949, had grown up in modest circumstances in an authoritarian, strict-

ly Catholic household in a small Black Forest village and had been educated at a Jesuit boarding school. An art history student and sometime painter, Turske discovered the glamour and high stakes of the contemporary art world while working part-time at a Düsseldorf museum. Soon afterward, he decided to try his hand at selling paintings, at first working out of his apartment. By 1974 he was showing major Swiss and German artists at his own Cologne gallery. In 1980, he went to Switzerland, because people had and spent more money there than in Germany. After dealing privately and then briefly heading a branch of the New York-based Knoedler & Company—according to Knoedler's Lawrence Rubin, there was a falling out over Turske's spending, and "We very rapidly grew dissatisfied"—he opened Turske & Turske in 1985.

While some people in Switzerland jumped to Turske's defense after the *Zitri Woche* allegations (later repeated in the German magazine *ART*), others were eager for every detail of Turske's dealings to be known. In February 1993, Eberhard Kornfeld, the prominent Bern gallery owner and auctioneer, took me to see Franz Gertsch and his wife, Maria, who live on an isolated hillside an hour from Bern. Gertsch was represented by Turske for 17 years, until 1992. On the drive up, Kornfeld remarked that Turske had managed to live in great luxury in Ireland while going bankrupt in Zurich and failing to pay Gertsch and his other artists. "Turske is the Felix Krull of the art world," Kornfeld said—hardly the first, or last, time Thomas Mann's swindler would be invoked in connection with Turske.

Franz and Maria Gertsch resemble the rugged, hard-working farmers of Swiss folk art. As we talked, we sat eating Maria's intensely flavorful homemade coarse bread and hardtack with a nutty farmhouse Emmentaler and a local mountain cheese. Kornfeld had arrived with a basket of freshly laid eggs for Maria. Throughout our conversation, Kornfeld kept cutting up the cheese rind the rest

of us had cleared, making it into tiny cubes: he said they were for his chickens. Watching him chop away with a butcher's knife on the plain wooden board and turn his quarry into little pieces. I felt as if he were doing what Turske had done to his artists and their work, and what lots of people would now like to do to Turske.

"It is just incredible, the terrible things that Veith has done to us," Maria lamented. "Veith could be friendly and gentle when he wanted, but often I had a sad feeling in my heart; I felt it was not true. I would ask him simple questions, and then he would answer with a so long story that it confused me completely." The Gertsches are miserable not just about what has happened to them, but also about what they describe as Turske's similar treatment of Turrell.

In retrospect, it seems clear that Gertsch had—up to a point—gained a lot from his association with Turske. The dealer promoted his work internationally, sold a lot of it and pushed the artist's prices up. But Gertsch felt rooked when Turske bought back one of his early paintings. Gertsch decided, as many artists do when confronted with their early work, that it was not up to his current standards. He told Turske that the work should not be resold, a request most dealers would have honored. Turske resold it anyway, but claimed Gertsch, with the stipulation that his client could never put it on the market again. Gertsch complained that Turske has since charged him \$200,000 for having denigrated and hence devalued that painting.

Gertsch accused Turske—who by their arrangement owned half of the artist's prints—of having used his artworks as collateral for loans, although their contract forbade such use. Gertsch also said that he has lost some prints that he had in effect advanced the dealer to help him try to avoid bankruptcy. He also maintained that Turske has held back money for art that has been paid for. The one recent time, Gertsch said, Turske did pay him—\$25,000 for a sale to the Staatsgalerie in Stuttgart—the payment was in the form of some of Gertsch's own prints. Gertsch claimed that he was owed \$380,000.

Yet in most instances the problems have been a result of the artist's naïveté as much as anything Turske did. For years Gertsch was thrilled by the attention the dealer gave him and by the appearance of real friendship and mutual understanding. In their rural retreat, both Franz and Maria Gertsch delighted in the meticulous, computer-generated statements from Turske's various companies listing the sales of the artist's oversize monoprints. In the days when payment was enclosed, the Gertsches had nothing to complain about. They had therefore agreed to conditions others might have refused, like allowing Turske

to own, in totality, the first half of several editions of prints on the assumption that he would try to sell Gertsch's share once he had sold his own.

Just before we left, I told the visibly exhausted Maria that I hoped she would forgive me one further question. "How do you make this incredible bread?" I asked. She grinned. "That is also too complicated to answer quickly. It's a sourdough, with many stages. I cannot explain easily—it is like everything with Turske."

TURSKE'S EX-WIFE AND FORMER BUSINESS PARTNER—and the mother of his son, Elias—still lives in Zurich. Irène Preiswerk has bold features and a sparkling smile, dramatically accented by long brown-and-gray hair. Preiswerk says she first met Turske in 1978 at the Basel art fair, where he had a booth. Preiswerk and her husband were looking for a Gertsch. "My first husband was fascinated with Veith." Preiswerk recalls. Her husband soon suggested that Turske join them and Franz and Maria Gertsch on a cruise in the Greek islands.

"That was when my marriage really broke up."

**"Veith has those John Lobb shoes**

**that cost \$3,000 a pair. The first time I met him, in Flagstaff, he was wearing them, and I just thought, What clunky shoes. It just shows all that I couldn't see."**

**—James Turrell**

Preiswerk says. "During the day, Veith discussed our marriage problems with my husband, and at night with me. And I thought, 'This man—he has the power to help me.' Everything was possible. It's like what he has done with the work of so many artists, and most recently with Turrell. He seduces people. He entuses you. It opens up a vibrating world."

Preiswerk says that it wasn't until 1986, after she and Turske had been married for two years, that she began to worry about his business dealings. Working with him at Turske & Turske in Zurich, she came to believe that "situations were never clear. Veith is a manipulator." (Preiswerk alleges that even the name of the gallery was a trick: she was never a partner, and there never was a second Turske. It's just that Turske, she says, thought the double name rang especially rich.) In 1989, bothered by the unpaid bills and irked when Turske told her he wanted to go bankrupt, yet possibly buy the gallery back at a later date, she left him.

But when Turske invited Turrell to Liss Ard, it seemed to rejuvenate the dealer's marriage. At Easter 1990, Preiswerk went to Ireland "because Jim was there. He has

*continued on page 181*

*continued from page 145*

also a presence which is very seducing. I fell in love with him in a way."

That fall, however, an event occurred back in Zurich that would undermine the progress of the Sky Garden. Preiswerk introduced Turske to Claudia Meister, mother of one of Elias's classmates. Preiswerk says that Turske instantly gleaned the state of Meister's disintegrating marriage. At dinner, Turske and Meister, according to his ex-wife, "were already in love. He was ready to have a new relationship. She was fed up with her situation." Preiswerk, for whom this was a sort of solution, suggested that Meister and her son, Jeremy, go to Liss Ard. She recognized that Claudia too might thrive with Veith's blend of domination and tender spoiling.

"At first, with Claudia and Jeremy, we were one big happy family." Preiswerk recalls. She was pleased—Meister was an improvement over her husband's previous mistress, "a bloody French chick which makes trouble. Now with Claudia

we could all work together with more energy on the Sky Garden." When they were not at Liss Ard, Meister lived with Turske in his loft in Zurich.

But in the summer of 1991, according to Preiswerk. "Claudia Meister said, 'I want a clear situation: friends in the house, professionals out.'" Turrell had to call for appointments. Preiswerk was no longer welcome. By the following January, Preiswerk and Turske were divorced.

Preiswerk continued to work at the Zurich gallery, but, by her account, on April 8, 1992, when she asked for payment for expenses she had incurred for a Franz Gertsch show, her ex-husband told her to be out of the office by noon. But first she was to show him every scrap of paper she was taking with her. According to Preiswerk, Turske grabbed her and twisted her arm until she began to scream. Two women working in the gallery rushed to restrain her. Preiswerk says that Turrell, who heard all this from another room, ended the scene by taking

her in his arms and escorting her home.

When asked about Georges Hertach—the Zurich banker who was in charge of Turske's account at the Bank für Gemeinwirtschaft (BFG) before committing suicide—Preiswerk says, "Hertach was fascinated by Veith, by the gallery and by Turrell." In the course of 1991, Hertach found himself lending Turske more and more until, according to Preiswerk, he had overstretched the limits of his power. At the end of the year, realizing that Turske's credit was too high, he was forced to freeze the dealer's accounts. So, she says, did the Schweizer Bank Gesellschaft—Turske's other source of funding. Hertach then tried to set up an art fund—the Century Fund—to get liquidity for the gallery. He said he could bring in clients and would find investors. But in January 1992, after failing to do so, he lost his job. BFG had discovered, according to Preiswerk, that Hertach had granted Turske a loan whereby artwork by Turrell that already

*continued from page 181*

served as collateral for another loan was now being used a second time.

Preiswerk says that in early April Hertach told her he was going to Ireland to live on the farm behind Liss Ard. But then, according to Preiswerk, Hertach was devastated by a letter Turske wrote blaming him for the failure of the gallery by not providing additional support. Preiswerk says that Hertach, who, according to her estimate, had lent Turske around \$4 million of the bank's money, felt betrayed. On April 9—the day after Preiswerk's scuffle at the gallery—when his friends thought he was on his way to Ireland, Hertach took an overdose of sleeping pills and put a plastic bag over his head.

JAMES TURRELL IS A PLEASANT, straightforward man with a full beard and short hair. When I met with him, he wore a gray herringbone jacket with suede shoulder patches. He is part Quaker and could have passed for the director of a Quaker school, with only his pointed cowboy boots suggesting a hint of the adventurer. Julia Turrell, a strikingly pretty and elegant woman, with shoulder-length blond hair and lively blue eyes, sees her husband's Quaker side as significant in his handling of Turske. "You're a pacifist, but you don't back down. Don't you agree that that's very Quaker, honey?" she asked her husband.

Turrell once thought Turske was a true believer. "Other people would have had more art-world street smarts," he laments. For Turrell, the Turske situation is "a morality tale, a story of real evil. Veith takes on people who have their eyes on the sky. Once the dreamer has his eyes up, you don't notice what happens on the table." Turske offered him two dreams: the chance to design the Sky Garden and the possibility of owning Inishkeame, the 83-acre island off the Cork coast, which was on the market for \$700,000. For a while, the artist looked neither at nor under the table.

Turrell told me he had agreed to a

fairly baffling plan for the acquisition of his island. Turske took out loans from the Anglo Irish Bank and the Bank of Ireland to cover most of the cost. BFG—Georges Hertach's bank in Zurich—guaranteed the loan, and Turrell put up 14 of his most important works, worth more than \$2 million, as collateral. Turrell put these light projections, space divisions and other pieces from the past 25 years, which were in the form of "gray books"—detailed instruction manuals with drawings and the artist's specifications—into Katesbridge, which Turrell described as an off-shore company established by Turske on the Isle of Man. The works in Katesbridge were not to be otherwise transferred or encumbered. But Turrell says that Turske violated that agreement by using the pieces to secure a second loan from BFG.

Not that Turrell or Katesbridge owned the island. Turrell says that White Properties, Ltd.—formed in Gibraltar—owned Inishkeame. This was not to be confused with White Properties Inc., the company formed in Panama, which owns the private side of Liss Ard. Yet confusion was inevitable: Irène Preiswerk says that "Inc." owned the island while "White Properties Corp."—based in Jersey on the Channel Islands—owned the house, while the man who sold Inishkeame, John Bennet, says that he always thought Turske was buying it through the same company that owned the house.

Turske was supposed to put the proceeds of his sales of Turrell's work into Katesbridge so that Turrell could pay off the loan on the island. According to Michael Bond, who for several years was Turske's right hand at Liss Ard, the dealer sold more than \$2 million worth of Turrell's work after the island contract went into effect. Yet, Turrell says, "Zero money went into Katesbridge. There was only a plethora of paper. Turske had stationery and invoice forms printed up. He would invoice something in and invoice against it. For whatever I made, he deducted expenses, greatly inflated. He may have used some of this money to pay

for his own private costs at Liss Ard, although we don't have evidence of it."

The deduction of expenses is a sore point for Turrell. Turske was charging the artist for more than the phone calls, cash advances and other costs Turrell expected to pay. "He flew first-class all the way, and took it off my earnings," Turrell says. "He is one of the classic control freaks. He wants everything run through him. So I didn't have direct contact with any bank, nor did I have a deed on the land. I thought I would get it when the land was paid off. Turske even set up an account—unknown to me—called the James Turrell Beneficiary Account. People paid into it. But I never saw any of the money." The artist can recount any number of incidents of museums or collectors who said they had paid Turske for work by Turrell and then were annoyed because Turrell had not delivered the piece, unaware that the reason was that Turrell had not been paid.

The fight that occurred between Preiswerk and Turske in the Zurich gallery was the turning point for Turrell. He was in a back room, trying to gather precise information on his consigned work. "Suddenly I heard shouting," he recalls. "I rushed out. Irène was in her little office, with two women restraining her. Veith was blue with anger, and she was in tears. He had attacked her because he had caught her trying to take out documents. Irène had been trying to warn me about Veith for a year, but I had never believed her before. Veith had always said to me, 'Jim, you know—as a man who has been divorced—how the woman you are leaving tries to destroy you.'" For a long time, Turrell had been persuaded that Turske's story was always the real one. That day he changed his mind.

"Veith uses complexity to make things vague," Turrell says. "He is very clever at using small facts to make large lies. Then, in the land of fog, he is able to have the edge or advantage he needs. He does it all with studied gestures, dressed to some strange set of nines.



Veith has those John Lobb shoes that cost \$3,000 a pair. The first time I met him, in Flagstaff, he was wearing them, and I just thought, What clunky shoes. It just shows all that I couldn't see. He and Claudia wear Armani to go out to dinner in an Irish village. The posturing has its effect: no one speaks up. With the way he presents himself, bankers deal with him. They don't deal with me."

VEITH TURSKE AND CLAUDIA MEISTER consider themselves the victims of a plot hatched out of the combination of an ex-wife's wrath and an artist's resentment of the dependence he developed. They deny all wrongdoing. They explained their plight to me when I visited them at Liss Ard in February 1993.

"Turrell has the feeling that Turske & Turske owes him a lot of money," Turske said. "It's the other way around. His offshore company owes Turske & Turske a lot of money. We paid a lot of things for him. It was a mistake. I was like a daddy. He would call and ask for things and I would say, 'O.K., you can have it.' We financed his island by giving personal guarantees and using my name and an offshore company to buy it because no one was willing to borrow"—Turske meant "lend"—any money to him. Whenever he called, he called for money—like a boy. He's very childish."

Turrell often needed cash because he was perpetually buying land around the Roden Crater, an extinct volcano in Arizona he has been reshaping and tunneling for over a decade. Turske claimed he always did his best to help, and paid all of the artist's bills. "Jim had a credit card in the name of one of my companies. He never cared who paid it. He liked to stay in good hotels. He would use the telephone all night. We can prove each penny he spent. The bookkeeping is very well done."

Turrell's attitude reflects a pattern, bemoaned the dealer. Whereas Turske had looked sharp and upbeat on my previous visit, now he seemed beleaguered.

The socks beneath the cuffs of his forest-green wide-wale corduroys perfectly matched the maroon of his luxurious, oversize sweater, but his Miami Vice growth of beard made him seem just a bit gone-to-seed. "I take on artists when they are already great and known to insiders, but unsuccessful in selling their work. Then, as is always the case when I deal with an artist, in very little time they are all doing well. But this is dangerous because it gives a feeling of dependency. So after being my friend on one day, on the next they accuse me of cheating them.

"Money makes everyone corrupt, especially when you control the income. Except for Franz Gertsch, the artists have all gone behind my back and undermined our relationship. They try to cash in without me," Turske observed, however, that Gertsch was naive, not nasty: "He feels that the bankrupt company owes him money, but he doesn't see that, following the contractual arrangements, he owes Turske & Turske money in liquidation and not the other way around. I know that Franz Gertsch would not have existed on this international scale without me. It took someone to tell him to do the large woodcuts. He never was courageous. And we made an enormous financial commitment. He has no idea what was done on this side."

"We've been so enthusiastic, and so naive; we were so naive," added Meister, her eyes betraying genuine grief. "We feel we have not hurt Franz. Not hurt Jim. Just carried on with the work."

"Turrell and I once worked like partners," Turske continued. "For example, when Jim insisted that I fire Irène—he told me I had to take this step because she hated me and was working against me—I listened to him," Turske claimed that he put Turrell "on the map in a big way," but accused him of violating important business agreements, including cutting him out of his dealer's commission. "Everybody warned me he was a difficult man, but I liked Jim very much. I invested more than \$1 million in the back-

ground on how to make Turrell's work a tradable, resalable piece of art. Jim is good at creating stories and visions, but not good at reality."

"James and I were like brothers," the dealer recalled. "And Irène and I were girlfriends," Meister added. But then, Turske said, his ex-wife and Turrell developed "a kind of personal relationship. They really wanted to do damage." According to Meister, the *Zürli Woche* articles accomplished Preiswerk's and Turrell's aims, bringing outside funding for the Sky Garden to a virtual halt. "The intention of the articles was to create wherever possible personal trouble," added Turske. "Not one word of the articles is true," Meister assured me.

Turske said the word "bankruptcy" is too strong for what happened to him in Zurich. After negotiating with all of his partners, he had put the gallery in liquidation; it was simply a sensible business decision. He suggested that his main problem was Georges Hertach. In the late 1980s, anticipating the crash of the art market, Hertach and Turske had decided to start the Century Fund. Hertach was responsible for organizing the fund's finances, and for finding investors for it. When the investors did not come through, said Turske, Hertach refinanced the fund—putting the gallery heavily in debt by granting loans without the authorization of his head office at the bank, although this was, claimed Turske, unknown to him at the time.

Turske seemed both saddened and irritated by Hertach's suicide: "It left me alone to deal with the bankers, facing loans above the standard amount." He was unable to salvage his business "because the artists turned against me and the money wasn't coming in." But Turske insisted that anyone who had been involved in business with him had no problems as a result, including his artists.

It was a rather balmy winter afternoon, and we went outside. Strolling the grounds hand in hand, the lovers resembled one of those upper-class couples in

continued from page 183

advertisements for Burberry raincoats. Meister caressed a wet rhododendron leaf. Turske marveled at the formation of crows all banding together in one direction and then another. Nothing in their current dilemma prevented Turske and Meister from being able to experience their surroundings with gentle delight. Moving on to the gravel of a site that had recently been excavated for one of Turrell's observation pavilions, Turske looked at a sky that to the rest of us might simply have appeared gray. "There's a lot of red in that sky today. And yellows." It may have been a pure and simple lie. It may have been what he sees and others cannot. Yet when he uttered it, it seemed the truth, so much that I too saw the reds and yellows.

BY THE END OF 1993, THE SKY GARDEN appeared to be doomed. It was hard to imagine where the money for the project in Skibberreen could come from, or how Turske and Turrell might possibly work together. They had met on a couple of occasions and, at one point, signed a legal agreement to resolve their differences, but each subsequently accused the other of violations.

Various people in the Irish art world—among them Declan McGonagle, the brilliant young director of the Irish Museum of Modern Art in Dublin—talked about possibly taking the Sky Garden over, but not if Turske was involved. It seemed impossible that Turske would be able to withstand the pressure of all the charges being brought against him from so many directions, yet he was so entrenched at Liss Ard that it was equally hard to figure where he might turn next.

But when I returned to County Cork this August, there was a flurry of activity at Liss Ard. Some 30 people were bulldozing and digging. I was told that the money to pay them all and keep the project alive was coming from the European Social Fund. Distributed by the Irish Department of Works, these funds are intended for the relief of unemployment. A local businessman remarked that, what-

ever Turske's history, it might as well be the Irish government supporting the digging, because otherwise it would be paying for the same people to be "on the dole."

The newspapers gave glowing reports. News came of the opening of Liss Ard Lake Lodge—a luxury hotel on the estate. Color photos in the *Cork Examiner* showed details of completed construction at this "nature lover's Paradise." The total project, which now had a cost of \$6 million attached to it, was called "the vision of Veith Turske."

James and Julia Turrell voiced a very different view on all of this, however. On the telephone from Arizona, Julia, her voice icy, said that it was illegal for Turske to refer to any of the work at Liss Ard as being by Jim. Turrell himself at first was loath to discuss any of the recent developments, explaining, "I don't trust anybody, anymore." But, in rather clipped tones, he continued, "At this point I remove all authorship from this work in Ireland. It's not my work. The Sky Garden is my title, not his."

"He was supposed to deliver the ownership of the island to me, which he never did; I never received anything," the artist complained. Turrell confirmed a tale that friends from a village near Inishkeame had rescued some of his possessions from the island in open boats one night this winter. The boats were reportedly down to the gunwales under the weight of antique armoires and telescopes and Turrell's other beloved objects. But in general, Turrell felt helpless. "There is little action to take. He has everything tucked away in offshore companies. You come across people like this. Life goes on. There's nothing further I can do."

On the other hand, Turrell managed to score considerable success this summer practically in Turske's backyard. The artist showed in two locations in Cork City, including a large installation at the Crawford Gallery. The works were well received. One savvy observer who knows both Turske and Turrell sees these successes as the artist's way of getting back at Turske. "It's

a case of locked antlers. Jim is implacable in his resentment. Veith is probably more flexible; if there were to be a treaty, Veith would come to it sooner. Jim's desire to come back to Ireland was prompted in part by his desire to show up Veith. Jim is very good at the propaganda war; he's relentless at it." This observer sees Turrell's tactics as a result of the artist's Quakerism. "Quakers would go to the gallows rather than acknowledge defeat. It's as if with these shows here Jim is putting it to Veith—as if he's asking Turske, 'Can you even finish one of these?'"

If you listen to Turske, the answer is yes. "I have really proved with the development of the project that we will do it," Turske told me recently, acting as if the problems we discussed on my last visit to Liss Ard were now behind him. "The base a year and a half ago was how things were misrepresented by my ex-wife. There are so many people who are not involved in reality."

Or perhaps they are involved above all in altering reality. Ellen Was, who as Turske's former personal assistant once served him loyally and efficiently, now insists, "This man has the art of deception down to a T. He is such an actor. He can disperse the clouds and make blue sky appear even if there isn't any. He even gets you to feel that you have been wrong all along, and that he is right."

The issue of reality seems to be on everyone's mind. In an interview in the *Irish Times* not long ago, Turrell, who has claimed his goal in Ireland was "tending or gardening the sky," said of the experience of viewing his art, "This superimposition of the daydream consciousness over the conscious, awake state, is the reality we generally inhabit." At least it seems to be the mental territory that both Turske and Turrell would have us believe they inhabit above all. *Nicholas Fox Weber is the author of Patron Saints: Five Rebels Who Opened America to a New Art, 1928-1943 and a forthcoming book on the painter Balthus, both published by Knopf.*