

INAUGURAL ARTIST IN RESIDENCE | 2024

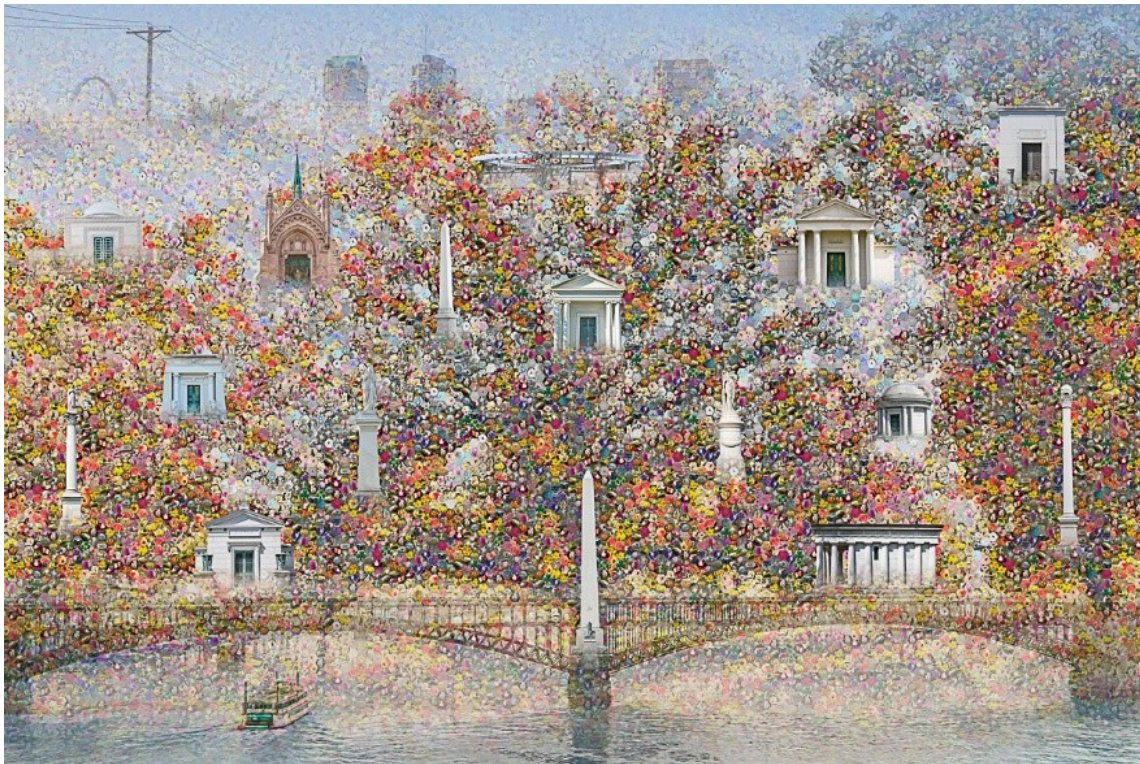
# BELLEFONTAINE

LOVE • LEGACY • RENEWAL

*“See Beauty Everywhere.”*

A photographic mosaic series created during the 2024 Bellefontaine Cemetery & Arboretum residency.

CHARLES R. TURNELL



## THE SERIES

# Love, legacy, and renewal

*“Bellevontaine became a beautiful bridge between love, legacy, and the promise of tomorrow.”*

SEE BEAUTY EVERYWHERE

## ARTIST STATEMENT

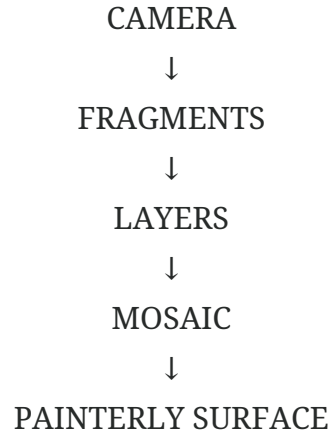
# A living archive

This catalog gathers work created during my 2024 residency at Bellevontaine Cemetery & Arboretum in St. Louis. I entered the residency interested in love and in the threshold between the material and spiritual worlds.

Bellevontaine offered a remarkable landscape for that exploration: architecture shaped by many traditions, winding roads, historic trees, flowers, memorial sculpture, and the quiet presence of generations of lives.

The work looks for connection across those layers. History becomes a living root. Architecture becomes symbol. Flowers become color, memory, and the small tesserae of a photographic mosaic. The cemetery is not presented only as a place of loss, but as a place where remembrance, nature, and human care continue to create meaning.

# Photography reconstructed as mosaic



## The camera as palette

My process begins with the camera. I photograph flowers, plants, landscapes, architecture, objects, and the world around me. These photographs become my palette.

Cropped fragments function like the small glass pieces of an ancient mosaic. I catalog, select, arrange, collage, and refine them until a larger image emerges, often finishing with painterly techniques.

The result is a surface that can feel simultaneously structured and deconstructed, photographic and painterly. Bruno David described the visual language as a form of “new pointillism.” I use the term Ars Musiva to connect the process to the long history of mosaic making while acknowledging its contemporary photographic construction.

Color is central. Growing up in Belize shaped my sensitivity to vivid color, while my interest in architecture, patterned surfaces, and world cultures continues to inform the work.

## A garden cemetery as a living archive

*“The history of St. Louis runs through Bellefontaine.”*

## Place, history, and memory

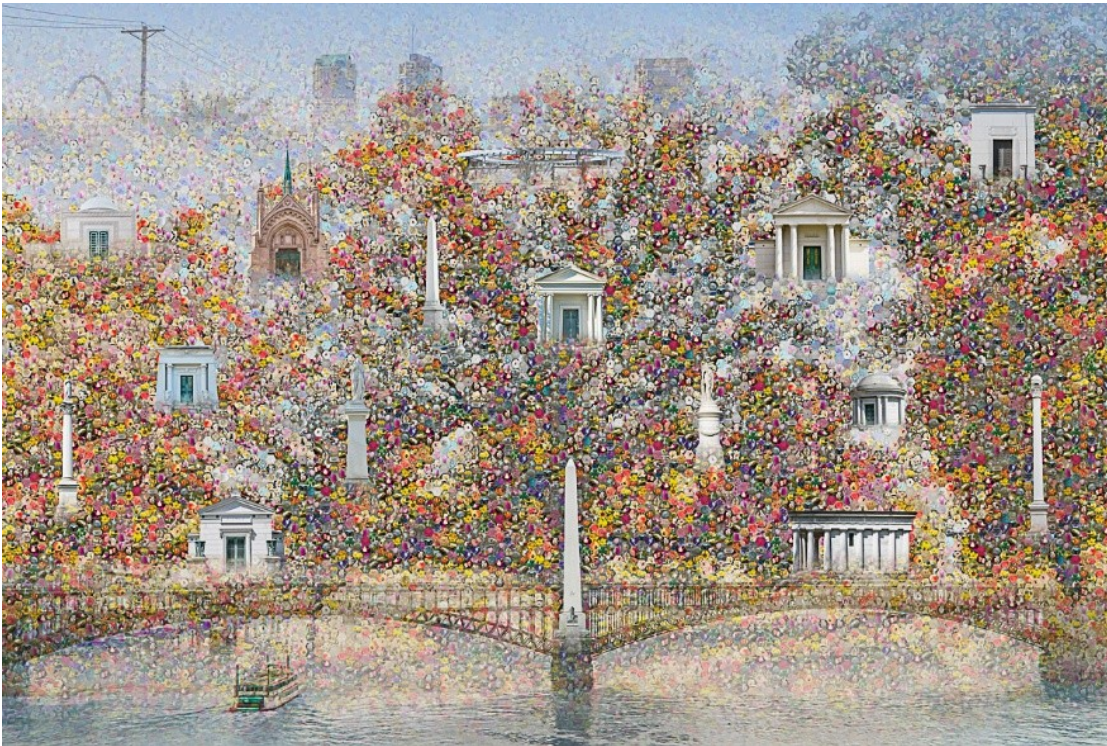
Bellefontaine is a place where St. Louis history, architecture, nature, and personal memory meet. The winding roads slow the pace of looking. Historic mausoleums draw on Egyptian, Italian, and other architectural traditions. Mature trees and seasonal flowers soften stone with cycles of growth and return.

In the Garden of Angels, small toys left in remembrance of children reveal how intimate objects can carry enormous emotional weight. The residency developed from these encounters.

I photographed flowers, memorial objects, sculpture, trees, and architectural details, then brought these elements into mosaics that consider love, hope, remembrance, and continuity. The cemetery became less a backdrop than a collaborator: a place where the past remains visible, nature continually changes the view, and acts of care keep memory present.

# Bellefontaine in Bloom

Photographic mosaic | Ars Musiva / Neo-Pointillism | 2024



This work brings Bellefontaine's architecture and garden landscape into a single, layered field. Mausoleums, monuments, trees, flowers, and the suggestion of water gather into a dense visual memory of place. The mosaic construction mirrors the residency itself: history, nature, and human remembrance do not appear as separate subjects, but as fragments that continually overlap. The result is a portrait of Bellefontaine as a living confluence, rooted in the past while still blooming into the present.

## Woman-Child

Photographic mosaic | Ars Musiva / Neo-Pointillism | 2024

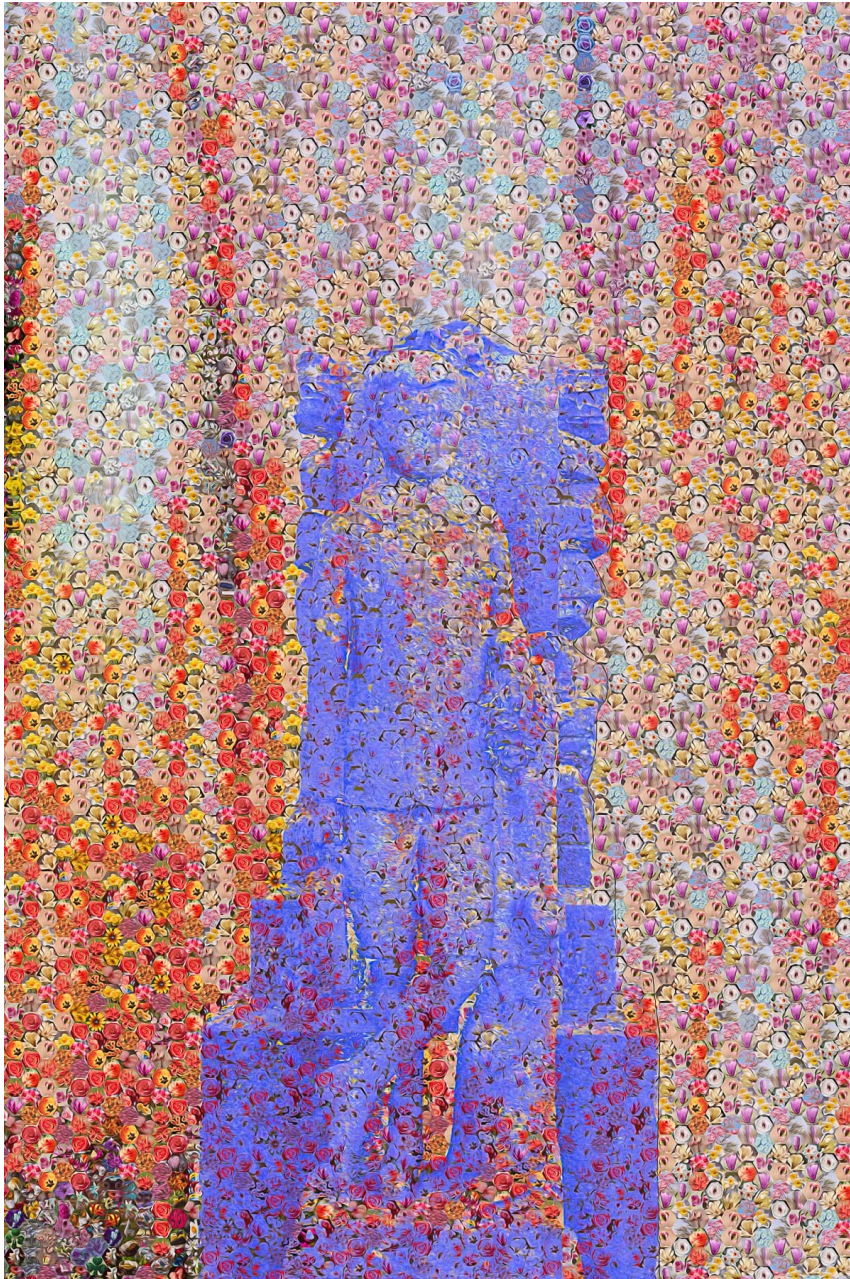
Within the residency's meditation on love and remembrance, *Woman-Child* holds tenderness at its center. A memorial image is surrounded and partially dissolved by a field of floral fragments, allowing stone, memory, and color to occupy the same space. The work echoes the quiet emotional power encountered throughout Bellefontaine, especially in places where personal gestures continue long after a life has ended. Love becomes less an object than an atmosphere that persists.



## Boy Blue

Photographic mosaic | Ars Musiva / Neo-Pointillism | 2024

A blue memorial figure emerges from a field of repeated floral forms. The strong color separates the figure from its surroundings and, at the same time, binds it to the mosaic surface. The work considers how monuments function: solid objects intended to preserve memory, yet continually transformed by weather, landscape, and the eyes of each visitor. Here, remembrance is not static. It is active, layered, and held within a larger field of life.



## Russell

Photographic mosaic | Ars Musiva / Neo-Pointillism | 2024

Russell approaches history through human presence. The portrait-like figure is built from warm fragments that blur the boundary between image and material surface. Rather than presenting history as distant or fixed, the mosaic draws the figure into a field of color and repetition. The effect suggests memory itself: recognizable, incomplete, reconstructed from fragments, and made vivid again through attention.



## Peace

Photographic mosaic | Ars Musiva / Neo-Pointillism | 2024

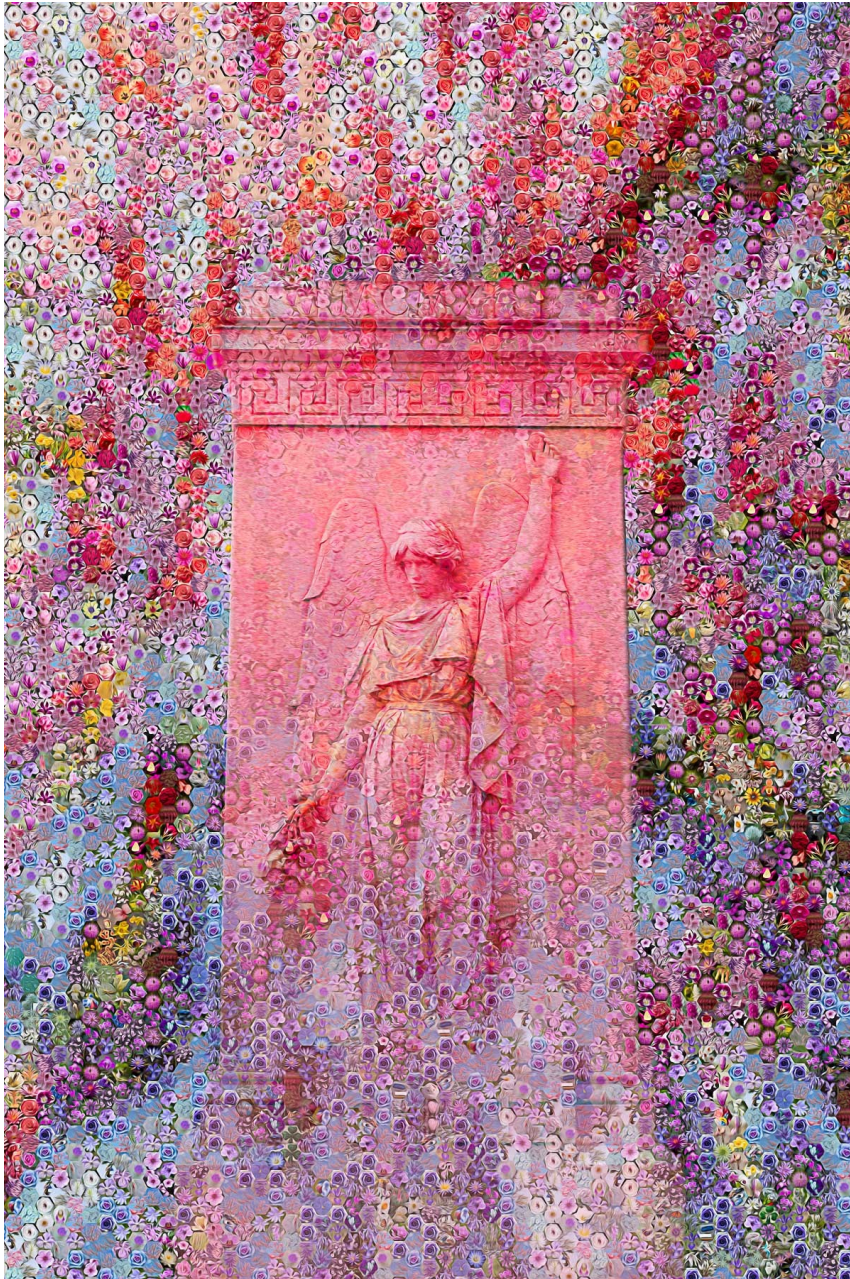
Peace places a sculptural figure within an enveloping field of saturated floral color. During the residency, I was interested in the movement from the material world toward the spiritual, and in the possibility that repeated pattern and color could create a state of calm. The figure appears suspended between stone and atmosphere, between object and memory. The surrounding fragments turn the cemetery landscape into a luminous space of contemplation.



# Joy

Photographic mosaic | Ars Musiva / Neo-Pointillism | 2024

Color becomes an emotional register in Joy. Architectural ornament and sculptural detail are absorbed into a radiant mosaic of pinks, blues, and floral fragments. The work resists the assumption that a cemetery must be visually somber. Bellefontaine revealed beauty, care, tenderness, and abundance alongside grief. In this piece, remembrance and joy are allowed to coexist, each intensifying the other.





# From observation to assembled image

*The work remains grounded in the physical act of looking, photographing, collecting, selecting, arranging, and refining.*

## 01 OBSERVE

Slow down and notice flowers, memorial sculpture, architecture, trees, symbols, light, and small details.

## 02 PHOTOGRAPH

Use the camera as both sketchbook and collecting tool, building an archive of visual material.

## 03 SELECT + CROP

Reduce photographs into fragments. Color, texture, shape, and rhythm determine the palette.

## 04 LAYER + ARRANGE

Assemble fragments into a larger composition, allowing repetition to create pattern and image.

## 05 REFINE

Use digital painting and finishing techniques to unify the layers while keeping the surface visibly constructed.

## CLOSING REFLECTION

# Love, legacy, and the promise of tomorrow

When I first entered Bellefontaine, I saw a landscape shaped by love: love expressed through architecture, through names carved into stone, through flowers, toys, trees, and the continued care of families and staff.

My guiding principle has long been “See Beauty Everywhere.” At Bellefontaine, that phrase took on a different depth. Beauty was not separate from grief, age, or loss. It existed alongside them, sometimes because of them, in the attention we give to what remains.

The work in this catalog is ultimately optimistic. It proposes that the past can provide roots rather than restraints, and that memory, nature, and human care can become material for a more thoughtful future.

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

# Charles R. Turnell

Charles R. Turnell is a photographer and visual artist whose work begins with observation and expands through a contemporary photographic mosaic process he calls *Ars Musiva*.

Born and raised during his formative years in Belize, he developed an early sensitivity to color, landscape, photography, and world cultures. His father gave him his first camera, while National Geographic opened a window onto distant places, architecture, nature, and the visual complexity of the world.

Turnell constructs images from individually photographed fragments, often using flowers and natural subjects as the tesserae of a digital mosaic. His work explores beauty, identity, memory, nature, migration, spirituality, and human connection.

In 2024, Turnell served as the inaugural Artist in Residence at Bellefontaine Cemetery & Arboretum in St. Louis.



*“The camera has taught me how  
to see.”*

**CHARLES R. TURNELL**

ARS MUSIVA • SEE BEAUTY EVERYWHERE

# CHARLES R. TURNELL

## VISUAL ARTIST | ARS MUSIVA

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## PRIMARY MEDIA

Photography, digital painting, photographic mosaic, and archival pigment printing

## CURRENT SERIES

Prairie & Sky (2026) | Stamped: The Making of America 250

## ARTIST BIOGRAPHY

Charles Turnell is a Belizean-American visual artist based in St. Louis, Missouri. His practice brings together photography, digital painting, and the visual traditions of mosaic and pointillism. Through his signature process, Ars Musiva, he constructs large-format compositions from hundreds of individually photographed fragments. From a distance, the works appear unified; viewed closely, they reveal intricate fields of distinct images, each carrying its own history, symbolism, and meaning. His recent work moves between the intimacy of the natural world and the complexities of American history. In *Prairie & Sky* (2026), feathers, flowers, prairie grasses, and expansive skies emerge from richly layered fields of color and texture, reflecting on fragility, resilience, belonging, and humanity's relationship with nature.

In *Stamped: The Making of America 250*, Turnell uses more than 1,200 photographed U.S. postage stamps to construct images connected to agriculture, westward expansion, Indigenous history, immigration, civil rights, innovation, and national identity. By transforming stamps - miniature instruments of public memory - into larger historical compositions, the series considers what America chooses to commemorate and what may remain outside its official story.

Turnell's perspective was shaped by his childhood in Belize, a Jesuit education grounded in philosophical inquiry, and years spent living and traveling across Latin America, Europe, and the United States. His work has been presented internationally, including at the XV Florence Biennale in Italy. Across his practice, he explores fragmentation, memory, identity, and connection.



## Practice and Process

### ARS MUSIVA

Ars Musiva is Turnell's contemporary mosaic language. It brings together photography, digital painting, and layered visual construction so that individual fragments become a unified image without losing their own identity.

In each work, fragments remain visible and active. This tension between unity and detail creates the slow reveal of the compositions: an image gathers from a distance, then opens into hundreds of individual histories up close.

### CONNECTION TO STAMPED

In *Stamped: The Making of America 250*, postage stamps become the tesserae of national memory. Each stamp is a small official image, a fragment of what the country has chosen to circulate and remember. Reassembled through Ars Musiva, those fragments become larger meditations on promise, contradiction, inheritance, and becoming.

The series extends Turnell's broader practice into a historical register. Where *Prairie & Sky* gathers fragments of the natural world into images of belonging and resilience, *Stamped* gathers civic symbols, landscapes, leaders, inventions, and contested milestones into a visual archive of American identity.

### PROCESS & MATERIALS

- Signature method: Ars Musiva, a contemporary mosaic process built from photographed fragments and digital painting.
- Medium: archival pigment prints with painterly layering and photographic reconstruction.
- Presentation: Arches Aquarelle Rag mounted on Dibond.
- Editions: limited edition of 5 for each work.

*Each composition asks how a nation, a landscape, or a memory is assembled from many parts.*

#### SELECTED EXHIBITION HIGHLIGHTS

## Professional Background

**2026** Prairie & Sky | Solo Exhibition, Bruno David Gallery, Clayton, Missouri

**2025** XV Florence Biennale | Fortezza da Basso, Florence, Italy

**2024** Inaugural Artist-in-Residence | Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum, St. Louis, Missouri

**2022** See Beauty Everywhere | Bruno David Gallery, Clayton, Missouri

**2021** Bilingual: Abstract & Figurative | Bruno David Gallery, Clayton, Missouri

#### ADDITIONAL EXHIBITIONS & RECOGNITION

- Collectors Choice | Studio Channel Islands, Camarillo, California, 2021 and 2020
- Human Touch | Art Saint Louis, St. Louis, Missouri, 2020
- An Order of Things | St. Louis Artists' Guild, Clayton, Missouri, 2019
- Art at the Station | Kirkwood, Missouri, 2018
- 2020 Second Best in Show, Collectors Choice, Studio Channel Islands
- PricewaterhouseCoopers publications; Hispanic Chamber of Commerce; six magazine covers, 2015-2016

#### STAMPED: THE MAKING OF AMERICA 250

## Exhibition Inquiry

Stamped: The Making of America 250 is available for exhibition as a curated body of limited-edition archival works. The series is suitable for galleries, cultural institutions, universities, civic spaces, and America 250-related programming.

#### EXHIBITION FORMAT

- Current catalog selection: 11 works, each presented as a distinct milestone in American memory.
- Medium: archival pigment prints on Arches Aquarelle Rag, mounted on Dibond.
- Edition: 5 per work.
- Artist talk, gallery walk-through, and public conversation available.
- Checklist, high-resolution images, pricing, and availability available upon request.

#### CONTACT

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<https://www.brunodavidgallery.com/artists/charles-turnell>

*The little details that shape humanity | See Beauty Everywhere*

