

Olafur Eliasson is an artist, who is inspired my perception, movement, embodied experience, and feelings of self. While working in various different areas such as creating sculpture, painting, photography, film, and installation, to him it is important to make his art accessible for everyone. Due to that, he participated in various architectural projects, interventions in civic space, arts education, policy-making, and issues of sustainability and climate change.

I hope to guide you on this trip into an artist's world.

Olafur Eliasson

a trip into an artists world

Anna Schönhof

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2021

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Biography

Olafur Eliasson's art is driven by his interests in perception, movement, embodied experience, and feelings of self. He strives to make the concerns of art relevant to society at large. Art, for him, is a crucial means for turning thinking into doing in the world. Eliasson's works span sculpture, painting, photography, film, and installation. Not limited to the confines of the museum and gallery, his practice engages the broader public sphere through architectural projects, interventions in civic space, arts education, policy-making, and issues of sustainability and climate change.

Eliasson was born in 1967. He grew up in Iceland and Denmark and studied from 1989 to 1995 at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts. In 1995, he moved to Berlin and founded Studio Olafur Eliasson, which today comprises a large team of craftsmen, architects, archivists, researchers, administrators, cooks, programmers, art historians, and specialised technicians.

Since the mid-1990s, Eliasson has realised numerous major exhibitions and projects around the world. In 2003, Eliasson represented Denmark at the 50th Venice Biennale, with *The blind pavilion*. Later that year, he installed *The weather project* in Tate Modern's Turbine Hall, London. *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*, a survey exhibition organised by SFMO-MA in 2007, travelled until 2010 to various venues, including the Museum of Modern Art, New York.

Innen Stadt Aussen (Inner City Out), at Martin-Gropius-Bau in 2010, involved interventions across Berlin as well as in the museum. Similarly, in 2011, *Seu corpo da obra (Your body of work)* engaged with three institutions around São Paulo – SESC Pompeia, SESC Belenzinho, and Pinacoteca do Estado de São Paulo – and spread out into the city itself. In 2014, *Riverbed* filled an entire wing of Denmark's Louisiana Museum of Modern Art with stones and water, emulating a river in a rocky landscape; later that year, *Contact* formed the inaugural exhibition at Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris.

Verklighetsmaskiner (Reality machines), at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2015, became the museum's most visited show by a living artist. In 2016, Eliasson created a series of interventions for the palace and gardens of Versailles and mounted two large-scale exhibitions: *Nothingness is not nothing at all*, at Long Museum, Shanghai, and *The parliament of possibilities*, at Leeum, Samsung Museum of Art, Seoul. *Green light – An artistic workshop*, created in collaboration with TBA21 (Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary), offers a response to the challenges of mass displacement and migration. Originally hosted by TBA21 in Vienna in 2016, the project was part of *Viva Arte Viva*, the 57th International Art Exhibition – La Biennale di Venezia, in 2017. Eliasson's site-specific installation *Reality projector* opened at the Marciano Foundation, Los Angeles, in March 2018, the same month as his solo exhibition *The unspeakable*

openness of things at Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing. In 2019, In real life, a wide-ranging survey exhibition of Eliasson's artistic practice over the past twenty-five years, opened at Tate Modern, in London, and travelled to Guggenheim Bilbao in 2020. Symbiotic seeing opened at Kunsthau Zürich in January 2020 and Sometimes the river is the bridge was shown at the Museum of Contemporary Art Tokyo in spring 2020.

Eliasson has also produced numerous projects in public space. Green river was carried out in various cities between 1998 and 2001. Eliasson designed Serpentine Gallery Pavilion 2007 together with architect Kjetil Thorsen for London's Kensington Gardens. The New York City Waterfalls, commissioned by the Public Art Fund, were installed along the city's waterfronts in 2008.

Your rainbow panorama, a circular coloured-glass walkway atop ARoS Museum, Aarhus, Denmark, opened in 2011. Harpa Reykjavik Concert Hall and Conference Centre, 2011, for which Eliasson created the facades in collaboration with Henning Larsen Architects, won the Mies van der Rohe Award 2013. Ice Watch brought melting icebergs from Greenland to Copenhagen in 2014 and to Paris on the occasion of the COP21 Climate Conference in 2015. Fjordenhus in Vejle, Denmark, the first building designed entirely by Eliasson and the architectural team at Studio Olafur Eliasson, was completed in June 2018.

As a professor at the Berlin University of the Arts, Eliasson led the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments; 2009–14), a five-year experimental programme in arts education located in the same building as his studio¹.

In 2012, Eliasson and engineer Frederik Ottesen founded the social business Little Sun. This global project provides clean, affordable energy to communities without access to electricity, encourages sustainable development through sales of Little Sun solar-powered lamps and chargers, and raises global awareness of the need for equal access to energy and light².

Eliasson and architect Sebastian Behmann founded Studio Other Spaces, an international office for art and architecture, in Berlin in 2014. As an architectural counterpart to Studio Olafur Eliasson in the same building, Studio Other Spaces focuses on



interdisciplinary and experimental building projects and works in public space³.

In 2019 Eliasson was appointed Goodwill Ambassador for renewable energy and climate action by the United Nations Development Programme. Eliasson lives and works in Copenhagen and Berlin.

designboom Interview

since the founding of his studio in 1995, olafur eliasson has engaged audiences across the globe with an extensive and important body of work spanning sculpture, painting, photography, film, and installation.

the danish/icelandic artist has set his monumental projects both in and around civic space and within museum institutions, each embodying his interests in perception, movement, experience, and feelings of self.

designboom: what originally made you want to become an artist?

olafur eliasson: my father was an artist as well as a cook on a fishing boat, so I grew up with his artworks and lots of art books. funnily enough, my first physical introduction to the kind of thinking that goes into art making actually came through breakdancing. I started dancing in my early teens, and I became very obsessed with the awareness that dancing gives you of your body and space.

DB: who, or what, has been the biggest influence on your work to date?

OE: having an artist for a father; my mother, who organized drawing lessons for me with an artist; robert rauschenberg's goat with a tyre (monogram, 1955–59); the fall of the berlin wall in 1989; seeing claude monet's water lilies (1914–26) at moma; the james turrell skyspace at moma ps1, new york (meeting, 1986); west coast light and space artists, such as robert irwin; reading a thousand plateaus, by gilles deleuze and felix guattari, in the early nineties; gordon matta-clark's cutting in half of a house (splitting, 1974); the quicksilver-like policeman in terminator 2; the berlin art scene from 1994 to 1999; francisco varela's brilliant book ethical

¹ www.raumexperimente.net

² www.littlesun.com

³ www.studiootherspaces.net

know-how: action, wisdom, and cognition; the efforts being made by tania singer, director of the department of social neuroscience at the max-planck-institute in leipzig, to change the world through compassion; my studio team; and, hopefully, the global success of cop21 in paris.

DB: what are the differences between setting your work within institutions in comparison to the public space?

OE: in a museum, the framework is clearly present. museums offer structures and communications that affect how viewers experience art. I don't necessarily go against the signature of the museum, but I do try to make it explicit. I'd like people to become aware that the museum is also a construct, that the artworks and experiences are relative to the users and to how the space is programmed. exhibiting in public space always entails working in a participatory way, but I actually don't really distinguish between the two; public spaces also have their own regulatory premises, their hidden or visible ideologies, and the museum is very much part of the world – entering a museum may even make you come closer to the world.

DB: what are you currently interested in and how does it feed into your creative thinking?

OE: art and creativity have much to offer the world outside the arts. artistic thinking is based on constant awareness of potentiality – of the idea that reality is malleable, relative, and that, through my actions, I can affect and change the world. art can touch people deeply; experience isn't just in the head, it's embodied. I'm speaking with more and more people who understand the scope of what art can do. people are realizing that climate change and energy inequality, for instance, can be addressed with some force through art. and I've grown passionate about these topics. in 2012, I created 'little sun', the solar-powered lamp and social business, together with frederik ottesen, and, last october, I did the intervention 'ice watch' in copenhagen, which marked the publication of the UN IPCC's fifth annual assessment report on climate change.

DB: in what ways does 'ice watch' build upon themes of global and environmental issues you have explored in your earlier pieces?

OE: interestingly, when I did 'the weather project' at tate modern back in 2003, climate change wasn't on anyone's agenda. at the time, the work was received as being about the museum as a stage, about sociality, embodiment, being singular plural. only later

did people start thinking about it in relation to the climate – and I think that's just fine. the work is open to this shift in attention. it welcomes it. even when I did 'your waste of time' in 2006, which anticipated 'ice watch' in some respects, climate change wasn't really on the global agenda. it was also not what drove me to bring chunks of hundreds-of-years-old icelandic ice into an art gallery for visitors to touch them. the focus then was on direct, visceral experience – which has long been central to my art practice.

from this, I realized that encountering old ice may have extraordinary effects, and in 2014 I did 'ice watch' in city hall square in copenhagen with minik roosing, a geologist and great friend. when you touch an old block of melting greenlandic inland ice, you physically feel the reality of time passing and climate change in a way different to reading the newspaper or through numbers and scientific data. this is where the arts speak a strong, direct language. in two minutes, 'ice watch' can communicate more than can be said in 700 pages of a scientific report.

DB: what drives your continued study of spheres?

OE: I'm fascinated by geometry and partial to all things circular and spherical. they have this powerful, almost cosmic dimension. most of my earlier spheres are, in fact, complex polyhedra. to develop these forms, I collaborated for many years with the icelandic geometer and architect einar thorsteinn.

I like to think of the spheres as models for planets. I'm interested in the fact that our recent move towards the anthropocene – towards acknowledging, that is, the impact of human activity on the ecological systems and atmospheres that surround us – has shifted our relationship to all things planetary. we no longer look at the earth from a distance from a disembodied, google earth perspective: we know that we are inseparable from it. as bruno latour says: there's no outside. we are inevitably caught up in the world and our actions have consequences for it, its atmosphere, climate. . . . the spheres are about looking at the world and at yourself at one and the same time.

DB: based on their geometrical properties, what optical and sensory effects do the spheres generate for an observer?

OE: let's say that the spheres are machines that create space, they space. some of them contain a light source inside that projects fragmented light out into the space where they are hanging, like a map projection. so it is not only, or primarily, the physical object in the space that interests me, but the way the light and the shadows

and the colors claim and create space together. they perform architecture, you might say. a recent example is my 'dust particle', 2014, now installed in an atrium at fondation louis vuitton in paris as part of my exhibition 'contact'. the particle is illuminated by sunlight that is projected into the building by a sun-tracking device placed on the roof, and it reflects the gehry building in such intricate ways as to make looking at it a very kaleidoscopic experience.

DB: in regards to site-specificity, how were you influenced by gehry's architecture in the creation of 'inside the horizon'?

OE: inside the horizon is a permanent installation located in a long passageway just outside the museum. the work is a viewing machine that affords a kaleidoscopic view of gehry's building, and of the visitors within the building and moving about the installation. it consists of forty-three columns organized in the shape of a fresnel lamp, and it can be viewed from various vantage points. on the one hand, when you move around it, it is quite disorienting to catch glimpses of people who are somewhere else entirely. the view shifts with every step you take and changes in a kind of hide-and-seek, remixing gehry's building, in a sense. on the other hand, there is one position from which the viewer sees himself in all the mirrors, reflected forty-three times. when you find this position, the work becomes a horizon and you are dispersed across its full length. it becomes a magnifying glass that shows you a bigger reality than what the individual reflections evoke.

DB: can you tell us about any upcoming projects that you are especially excited about?

OE: I have an important solo show opening at the modern art museum, gebre kristos desta center, in addis ababa, at the end of february. ethiopia is a country I have grown to know intimately over the years. in 2012 my institut für raumexperimente (institute of spatial experiments), an experimental arts school, did a ten-week residency in addis. I have many friendships from that time – with the alle school of design and art, for instance, where I'm now an adjunct professor, and with the extraordinary artists at netsa art village. I'm looking forward to installing the show and meeting up with friends and collaborators in addis.

I am also thrilled to announce that we are launching amazing new solar-powered products from little sun this year. I'll be posting the first prototypes on instagram soon.

Works

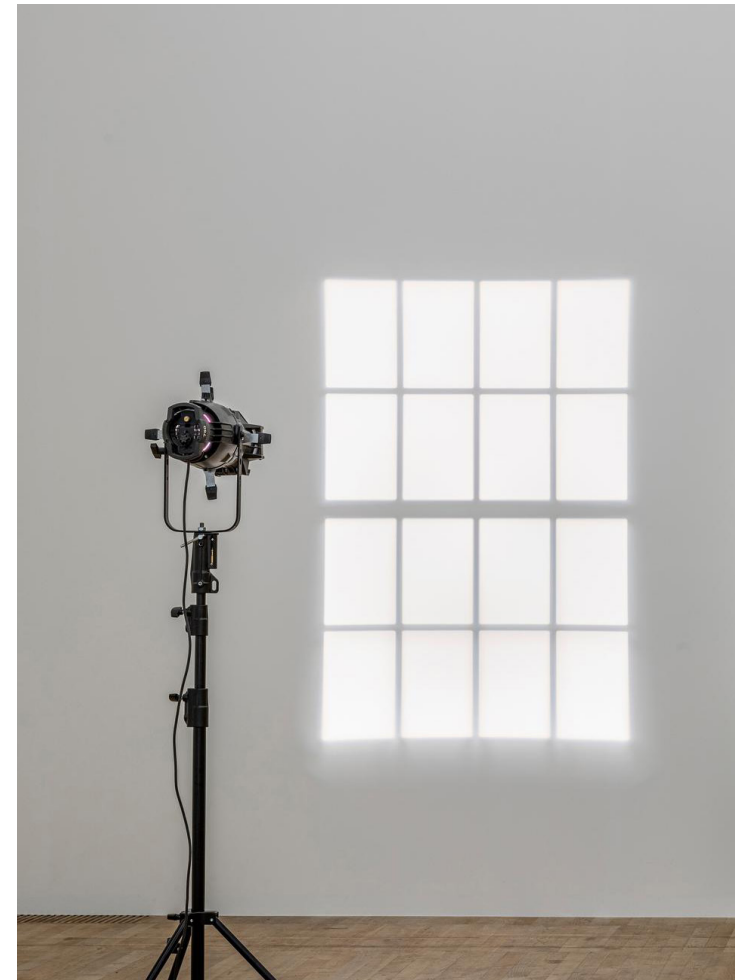
Window projection, 1990

Eliasson realized this early projection work while still a student at the Royal Danish Academy of Fine Arts in Copenhagen. The silhouette of a window frame was produced by partially masking a spotlight using a gobo, a special stencil used to create lighting effects in the theatre. Over the years, Eliasson has continually explored the effects of projected light, with particular emphasis on how light and shadows transform and define a space.

Materials

Spotlight, gobo, tripod

Window projection, 1990, Tate Modern, London, Photo: Anders Sune Berg





Die organische und kristalline Beschreibung, 1996
The Winter Palace of Prince Eugene of Savoy, Vienna
 2015, Photo: Anders Sune Berg

Die organische und kristalline Beschreibung, 1996

A powerful HMI projector stands on the floor of a room in front of a wave effect machine. The wave effect machine is equipped with one yellow and one blue color filter. The projector throws light onto a convex mirror, which reflects the coloured light across the entire space. The light is refracted, so that it resembles reflections on water. The light reflections move slowly up and down, affecting the viewer's sense of balance.

Materials

Projector, wave effect machine, colour filters (blue, yellow), convex mirror





Reversed waterfall, 1998, neugerriemschneider, Berlin, Photo: Jeppe Hein

Reversed waterfall, 1998

A rough four-tiered scaffolding placed in a pool of shallow water supports four rectangular metal basins, one on each level. A system of pumps and hoses shoots jets of water upwards, from basin to basin, reversing the usual gravitational flow. The water sprays wildly, not restricting itself to the basins and pool but also dampening the immediate surroundings. The sound of splashing water is clearly audible over the murmuring of the electric pumps, and the air is filled with a subtle sensation of moisture. Reversed waterfall has been shown both indoors and out.

Materials

Scaffolding, steel, water, wood, plastic sheet, pump, hose

Ice pavilion, 1998

Ice pavilion is a simple, curved mesh roof supported by six stainless steel legs. A small sprinkler at the top of the structure is activated on days when the temperature drops below zero. The water running down the roof freezes, giving the impression of ice 'growing' on the structure. As the weather fluctuates, an intricate configuration of irregular icicles arises. Ice pavilion was originally developed as an experiment; the artwork only exists when it is encased in ice.

Materials

Stainless steel, water, sprinkler, hose

Ice pavilion, 1998, Reykjavik Art Museum, Kjarvalsstaðir, 1998, Photo: Einar Falur Ingolfsson





5-dimensional pavillon, 1998, Strandparken, Holbæk, Denmark, 2000, Photo: Noshe

5-dimensional pavillon, 1998

Developed in collaboration with Einar Thorsteinn, this is the first of a series of pavilions exploring fivefold symmetry. The latticework structure is organised around so-called Ammann lines, five sets of parallel lines that cross each other at angles of 108 and 72 degrees. The pattern that arises is aperiodic, which creates a combination of harmony and confusion and defies viewers' expectations.

Located in a park on the banks of the Holbæk Fjord, Denmark, 5-dimensional pavillon was designed specifically for the site, with every detail of the site planned, including the foliage. The pavilion lies between two paths running parallel to the water – one that is low-lying and close to the fjord, and another, further inland, on a slight elevation. The structure has a circular opening at the top and four arched portals leading into its interior. A small stream flows down the rocks from above the upper path and is channelled into a circular pool at the centre of the pavilion.

Materials
Stainless steel

Vortex for Lofoten, 1999

In this work, water in a transparent cylinder is spun into a vortex nearly as tall as the container. The viewer, unable to view the surface of the water due to the height of the artwork, perceives the vortex's void as a slowly undulating, three-dimensional cone at the centre of the tank.

Materials
Water, pump, acrylic glass, hose, metal

Vortex for Lofoten, 1999, Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie Karlsruhe, Germany, 2001, Photo: Franz Wamhof

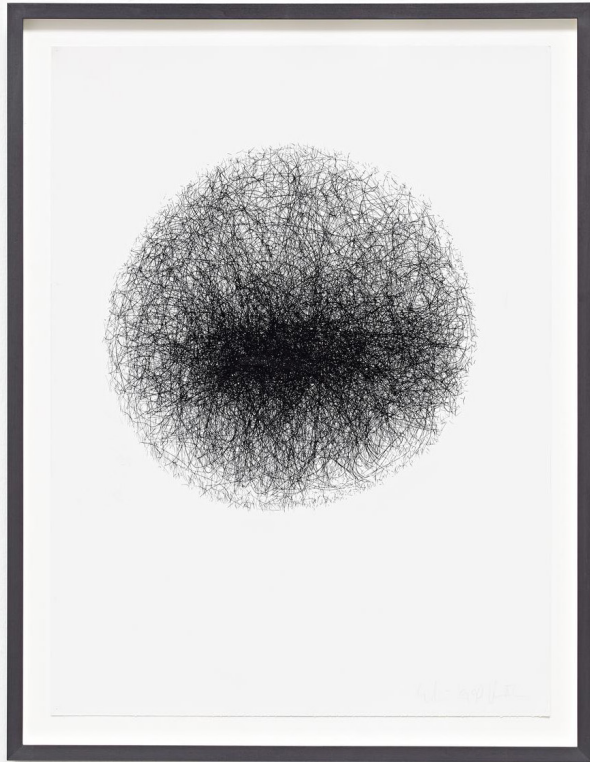


Untitled boat drawing, 1999

Olafur Eliasson in collaboration with Elias Hjørleifsson, 1998. These drawings are based on a concept that Eliasson produced with his father, Elias Hjørleifsson. Hjørleifsson, who was an artist as well as a sailor, created the drawings on the boat where he worked. He dipped a ball of about 3 cm diameter into black ink and allowed it to roll across a sheet of paper, following the motions of the boat for a time agreed on by him and Eliasson. The two conversed over the phone during these experiments. According to Eliasson, the works had both cosmic attributes – as they illustrated the varied and unpredictable movement of the ocean – and traces of the everyday, since they were created during Hjørleifsson's normal work day.

Materials

Ink on paper



Der drehende Park, 2000, Neugnadengeld, Nordhorn, Germany, 2000, Photo: Helmut Claus

Der drehende Park, 2000

Cube-shaped wire cages filled with different sized chunks of local sandstone are stacked into slightly curved wall elements. The six walls are arranged to form an exact geometric system. In spite of the open form, which is precisely aligned to the north and south entrances, the spiral structure seems to form a closed room that gives no view to the outside.

Materials

Stones, wire, metal



Fivefold cube, 2002, Photo: Jens Ziehe, 2015

Fivefold cube, 2002

A three-dimensional translation of the Amman lines that appear across the artist's explorations of fivefold symmetry, Fivefold cube is based on a geometry experiment undertaken with Eliasson's long-time collaborator, the mathematician Einar Thorsteinn. Constructed from panels of OSB particle board, the waist-high sculpture presents a composite of five cubes that have been rotated around a common axis and placed inside one another to produce a complex yet symmetrical form. The elegance and precision of the geometry contrasts with the organic irregularity of the scattered strands of compressed wood from which it is composed.

Materials
OSB board

The inverted verge, 2003

The image created by hanging fiberglass cables can be observed through a camera obscura, where the image is turned 180 °.

Materials
Wood, optical fibre, projector, glass lens, projection screen, fan

The inverted verge, 2003, Galleria Emi Fontana, Milan, 2003, Photo: Roberto Marossi





La situazione antispettiva, 2003

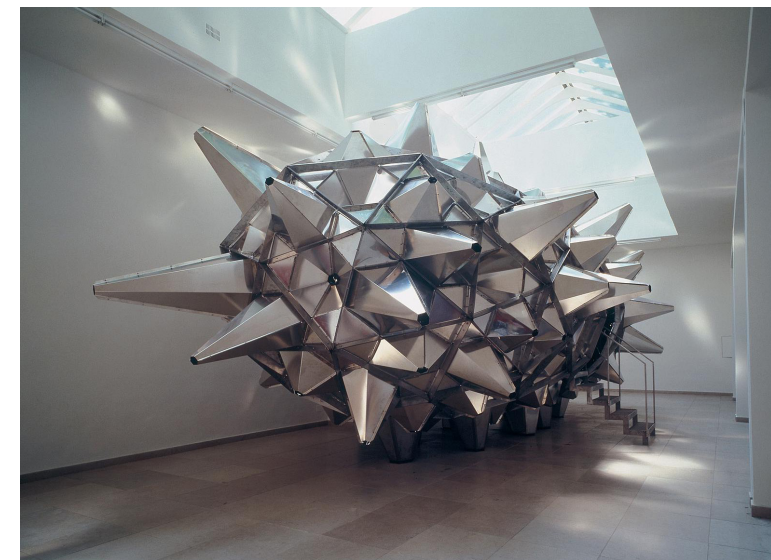
Originally shown as part of the Danish Pavilion at the 50th Venice Biennale in 2003, *La situazione antispettiva* seems to float above the gallery floor, a spiny pod with a short staircase leading up into its cave-like interior. The work's appearance results from the approximately 250 stainless-steel hexagonal kaleidoscopes that jut into and out of it. There are three different sizes of kaleidoscope, with each size represented in a variation facing outwards and a variation facing inwards.

Through the kaleidoscopes' open ends, viewers can glimpse the work's polished, complex interior even before they mount the short staircase leading up to the entrance. Once inside, the viewer is confronted with multiple fragmented reflections of herself, other visitors, the surrounding space, and distorted splotches of light. The work, whose title translates roughly to 'the anti-spectival situation', proposes an experience of seemingly infinite space – a space that flouts the rules of central perspective in favour of multiplicity.

Materials

Stainless steel, stainless-steel mirrors

La situazione antispettiva, 2003, Danish Pavilion, 50th , Biennale di Venezia, Venice, 2003, Photo: Olafur Eliasson





Your space embracer, 2004, Brändström & Stene, Stockholm, 2004, Photo: Carl Henrik Tillbergs

Your space embracer, 2004

A ring of mirrored glass rotates slowly, suspended centrally from the ceiling of a darkened gallery space. Placed on a tripod, a focused spotlight projects light onto the ring so that only the area of the ring is illuminated. The beam of light creates a shadow behind the rotating disc, as well as an arc of reflected white light that slowly scans the room

Materials

Glass mirror cylinder, wire, motor, HMI lamp, diaphragm, tripod

Umschreibung, 2004

Permanently installed in the atrium of an office building in Munich, two spiral staircases interlock with each other, creating a continuous loop in the form of a double helix. To plan the work, a double helix was projected onto the surface of a sphere. The heights of the steps vary slightly to compensate for the curvature of the staircases, growing shallower at the poles. Precise engineering was necessary to enable the structure to balance on one point.

The continuous loop of Umschreibung contrasts starkly with the office courtyard in Munich where it is installed. Umschreibung – which can be translated as ‘circumscription’ or ‘periphrasis’ – proposes a movement without destination, a space defined by motion rather than walls.

Materials

Stainless steel, wood

*Umschreibung, 2004, KPMG Deutsche Treuhand-Gesellschaft, Munich, 2004
Photo: Studio Olafur Eliasson*



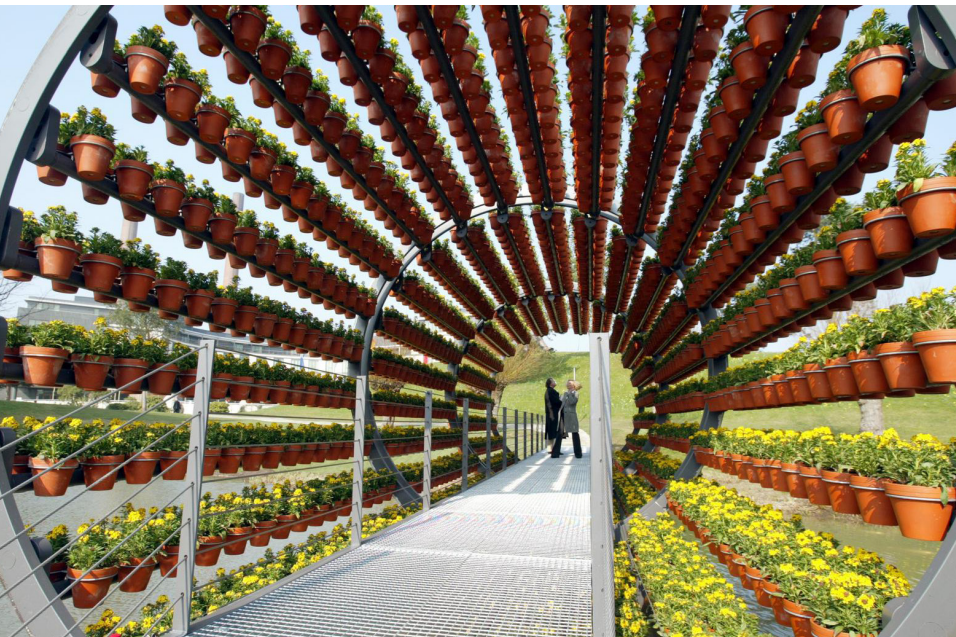
Dufttunnel, 2004

A site-specific work located in Wolfsburg, Germany, Dufttunnel is made up of 2,160 potted plants, arranged in three tubular sections that revolve at different speeds. Visitors walk through the tunnel on a steel grating while the plants rotate slowly around them. Depending on the season, one of six types of plants are used.

Materials

Stainless steel, motors, ceramic pots, soil, yellow wallflower (*Cheiranthus cheiri*), horned violet (*Viola cornuta*), heliotrope (*Heliotropium arborescens*), lesser calamint (*Calamintha nepeta*), lavender (*Lavandula angustifolia*), and sage (*Salvia officinalis*)

Dufttunnel, 2004, Autostadt Wolfsburg, Germany, 2004



Dagslyspavillon, 2007, VKR Holding, Hørsholm, Denmark 2007, Photo: Jakob Hunosøe & Ebbe Stub Wittrup

Dagslyspavillon, 2007

Dagslyspavillon (Daylight pavilion) is a multicoloured, ribbed ring with one side partly submerged in the ground and the other angled up towards the sky. Inspired by Le Corbusier's brise-soleil technique, coloured glass triangles, which map out the visible spectrum, were integrated into the upper portion of the steel frame ring, while the lower panels are made of stainless steel.

Standing in the middle of the pavilion, a person of average height will observe the sun's position on any given day on one of the steel rings. Which ring the sun touches varies according to the time of year, with the sun traversing the lowest ring on the winter solstice and the top ring on the summer solstice. Over the course of a day, the sun follows the ring from east to west. Vertical elements on the pavilion indicate the hours from sunrise to sunset, with the sun always crossing the centre of the ring at noon. At the point on the ring where the sun dips below the horizon, the coloured triangles are replaced by grey steel.

Dagslyspavillon is site-specific in the strictest sense of the term. It is the first built structure to be realised by Studio Olafur Eliasson based on sun-path studies and was designed according to the trajectory of the sun for the exact location where it is installed, in Hørsholm, Denmark.

Materials

Stainless steel, glass, colour filter foil, concrete

The parliament of reality, 2006-2009

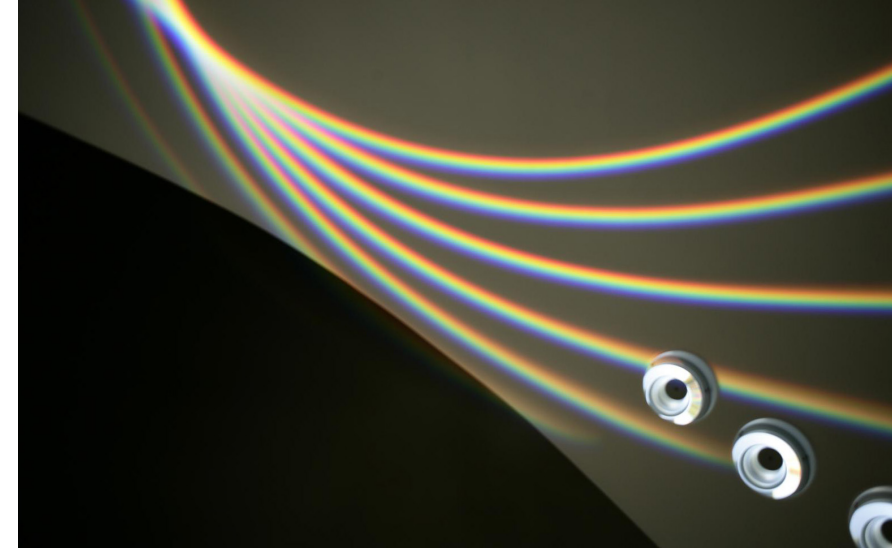
The parliament of reality nestles gently within the green campus of Bard College in Annandale-on-Hudson, New York. A ring of trees circumscribes a gathering place on a round island at the centre of an artificial pond. In spring, summer, and autumn, the twenty-four Golden Chain trees (*Laburnum anagyroides*) screen the artwork off from the surroundings, creating a discrete natural space for meeting. A bridge covered by an arched tunnel of stainless-steel tracery leads to the island.

Boulders arranged around the periphery of the island invite users – students, teachers, and visitors – to sit down, relax, and discuss. Individually cut stone tiles on the floor map out a pattern of criss-crossing lines that converge clock-like at twelve points along the island's circumference. The pattern, inspired by the twelve-point wind rose of antiquity and by the intersecting lines of nautical charts, gestures towards the navigation of ideas that is the central activity of a parliament.

Materials

Concrete, stone, stainless steel, water, Golden Chain trees (*Laburnum anagyroides*), other plants

The parliament of reality, 2006-2009, CCS Bard, Annandale-on-Hudson, New York, 2009, Photo: Karl Rabe



*Sunspace for Shibukawa, 2009, Hara Museum ARC, Shibukawa, Japan, 2009
Photo: Olafur Eliasson*

Sunspace for Shibukawa, 2009

Situated on the grounds of the Hara Museum ARC, in Shibukawa, Japan, *Sunspace for Shibukawa* is set against the backdrop of the museum building and the surrounding mountains. Reached via a path, the polished stainless-steel structure is an observatory designed to chart the path of the sun across the sky.

The design derives from extensive sun-path studies of the location undertaken by Studio Olafur Eliasson. Inside the work, a narrow antechamber leads into the inner space, which is large enough to admit a single viewer or a small group. On sunny days, visitors perceive arcs of light projected onto a curved surface opposite the entrance. The full colour spectrum is cast by one of thirteen prisms arranged according to the sun's path along the north-south axis of the work's domed roof.

Approximately every second week, one of the prisms concentrates the rays of the sun into a perfectly circular rainbow. Because the work is constructed according to solar time, the exact dates of when the circular rainbows appear shift slightly from year to year but correspond to the days in the Japanese calendar known as *sekki*. Marking the changing of the seasons, these days include the solstices and equinoxes and divide the year into twenty-four equal parts. As the days lengthen, the circular rainbows appear later and later in the day. *Sunspace for Shibukawa* thus makes visible the progression of time and the motion of the earth around the sun.

Materials

Stainless steel, glass, glass prisms



*Your rainbow panorama, 2006-2011, ARoS Aarhus Kunstmuseum, Denmark
Photo: Lars Aarø*

Your rainbow panorama, 2006-2011

In 2007 Eliasson and his studio won an invited architectural competition with a proposal to transform the rooftop of ARoS Aarhus Art Museum, in Denmark, which was built by schmidt hammer lassen architects. Installed in 2011, Your rainbow panorama offers visitors sweeping views of the city, the sky, and the distant horizon. The elevated 360-degree walkway Your rainbow panorama is 150 metres around and glazed with rainbow-coloured glass. Visible from afar, the work divides Aarhus into various colour zones and acts as a beacon for people moving about the city – an effect that is heightened at night when lights running the circumference of the walkway illuminate it from within.





Your sound galaxy, 2012, Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, 2014, Photo: Xing Yu

Your sound galaxy, 2012

Your sound galaxy suspends a group of twenty-seven polyhedrons from the ceiling in two horizontally concentric circles. Each polyhedron is made of a stainless steel frame clad in mirrored glass that has been turned inward so that the blue-grey backs of the mirrors act as the faces of the solid. A single halogen light mounted inside each polyhedron is multiplied by the reflective interior into a twinkling glow that escapes through the gaps in the frames.

The polyhedrons are organisable into nine 'families' of three related forms. In these families, two of the three polyhedrons are designated as duals of one another, meaning that the number of vertices on the one polyhedron is equal to the number of faces on the other. Constructing two duals within each other creates the third polyhedron of the family, called a compound. The dual solids are all arranged in the outer circle, with their respective compounds aligned between each pair and hanging in the inner circle. Beginning with the two pyramid-shaped tetrahedrons in the outer circle – the first and simplest set of dual solids – the work exhibits a clear sequence in a clockwise direction, as the polyhedrons grow increasingly more complex and multi-faceted. Despite this, the visual logic between a given pair of dual solids and their compound remains intuitive.

The work's title gestures to a recurring worldview in Western metaphysics, shared by thinkers as diverse as Pythagoras, Plato, Boethius, and Johannes Kepler, and which describes the motion of celestial bodies in terms of a natural harmony and mathematical music. As the viewer walks beneath the artwork, the lights sparkling through the cracks in the frames above produce an effect whose visual rhythms, dynamics, and counterpoint are suggestive of a musical composition. Shifting perspectives, the viewer creates his or her own luminous orchestration of this silent sound galaxy.

Materials

Stainless steel, glass mirrors, halogen lamps, wire

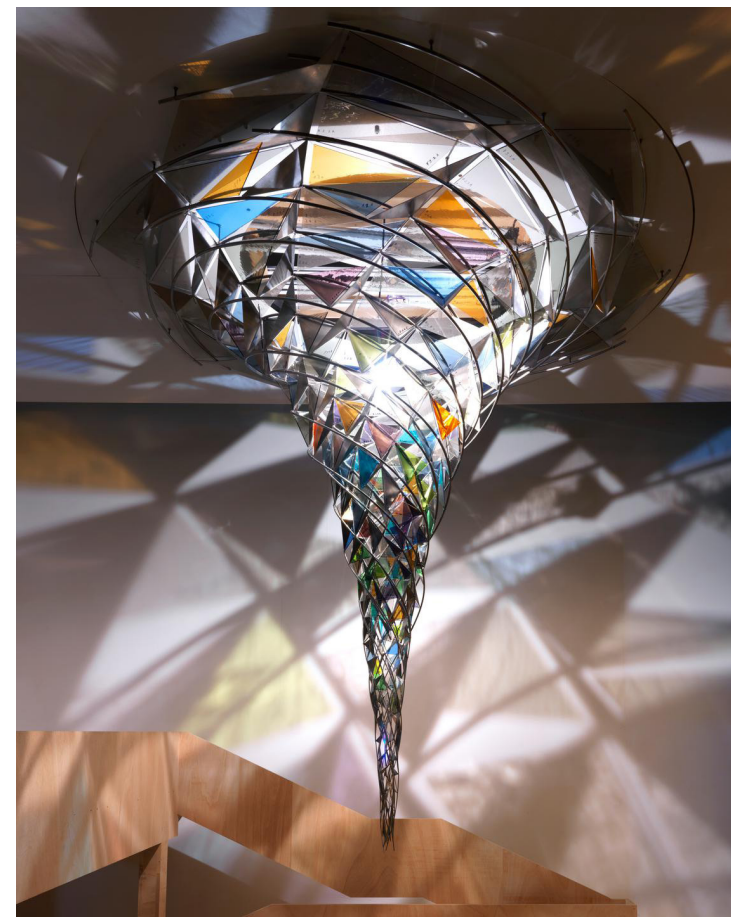
Model for Wirbelwerk, 2012

The intertwined coils of Wirbelwerk channel the dynamic energy of a vortex. The work extends down from the top of the atrium of the Lenbachhaus museum, Munich, to just above visitors' heads. Composed of sets of conical spirals coiling in opposite directions, Wirbelwerk tapers from a diameter of around seven metres at its broadest point to a narrow tip more than eight metres below. Made of polished metal tubes and hand-blown coloured-glass triangles, the work draws visitors into the visual universe of the paintings in the galleries above. Illuminated from within, Wirbelwerk, which translates roughly to 'whirl work', lights up the entire atrium, casting flecks of colourful light and shadows onto the surrounding walls. These projections fluctuate with the level of daylight entering the atrium, appearing sometimes more distinct and sometimes more diffuse.

Materials

Stainless steel, stainless-steel mirrors, coloured glass, HMI lamps

Model for Wirbelwerk, 2012, Photo: Jens Ziehe



Attraction, 2015

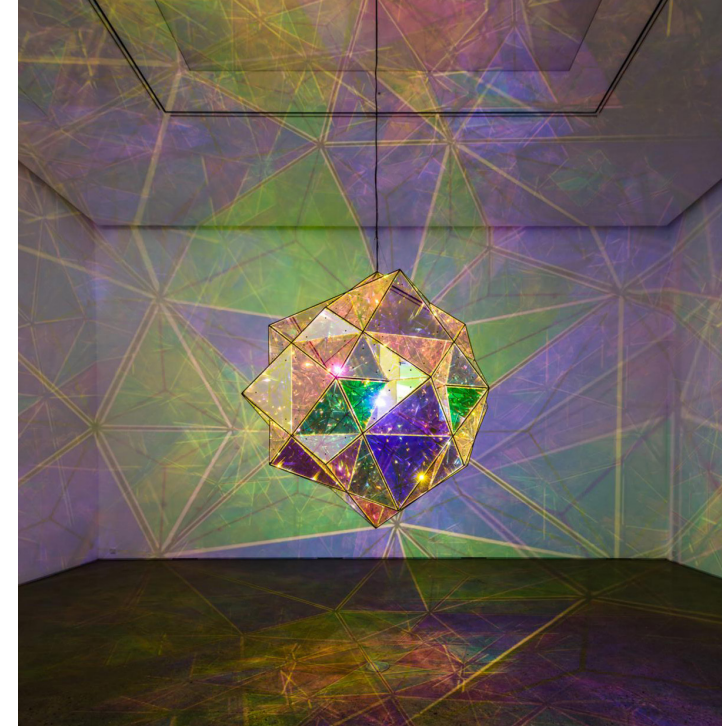
A meteorite hovers in mid-air, suspended by the attractive forces of a red magnet that is hung above it by wire. The meteorite, anchored to the floor with a thin steel wire, pulls the magnet towards it, holding it in place. The lengths of the wires attached to the magnet and the meteorite do not allow the two objects to ever meet. Instead, the pair move in a subtle anti-gravity dance, the small gap between them a gesture to both their mutual attraction and their inability to meet.

Meteorites serve as a powerful inspiration for Olafur Eliasson, who emphasises the enormous spans of space and time bridged in the simple act of touching one.

Materials

Meteorite, magnet, steel wire

Attraction, 2015, Mirrored Gardens, Hualong Agriculture Grand View Garden, Panyu, Guangzhou, China, 2015, Photo: Luo Xianglin, Chen Shengming



*The exploration of the centre of the sun, 2017, PKM Gallery, Seoul, 2017
Photo: Jeon Byung Cheol, 2017*

The exploration of the centre of the sun, 2017

Light shines out from the centre of an asymmetrical polyhedron that hangs from the ceiling, illuminating the work itself and casting variegated patches of light and shadow around the room. The form combines a rhombic dodecahedron (a polyhedron with twelve rhombic faces) with an icosahedron (which has twenty triangular faces).

The result is a complex, not-quite symmetrical polyhedron that stimulates the viewer to move around the work and examine it from multiple angles. The black powder-coated stainless-steel frame incorporates panes of iridescent colour-effect-filter glass, which reflect light of a single colour while allowing the remaining light (which is of the complementary colour) to pass through. A solar panel on the gallery roof powers LEDs mounted on a slowly rotating armature suspended within the work's core. The highly reflective, colour-limiting panes of glass multiply the light countless times, producing a galaxy-like array of shifting stars in a variety of colours.

Materials

Stainless steel, paint (black), colour-effect filter glass (blue, green), LED bulbs, photovoltaic unit, motor



Glacial currents (yellow, sienna), 2018, Photo: Jens Ziehe

Glacial currents (yellow, sienna), 2018

These watercolours were produced using chunks of ancient glacial ice that were fished from the sea off the coast of Greenland. The ice was placed atop thin washes of colour on a sheet of thick paper. As the ice gradually melted, the resulting water displaced the pigment, producing organic swells and fades of colour.

Materials

Watercolour, Indian ink and pencil on paper

Meteorological rainbow circles, 2019

This matrix of elliptical and circular mirrors suggests a sequence of rotating discs that change color as they turn. The flow of colors across the mirrors, along both horizontal rows and vertical columns, presents a regular progression of hues along the spectrum of visible light, a subject that Eliasson has been exploring for many years through his Colour experiment paintings, large-scale installations, and other works.

Materials

Laminated coloured glass (blue, shades of orange, purple, and green, yellow, red), aluminum

Meteorological rainbow circles, 2019, Photo: Jens Ziehe





Our glacial perspectives, 2020, Grawand Mountain, Hochjochferner glacier, South Tyrol, Photo: Oskar Da Riz

Our glacial perspectives, 2020

Commissioned by The Talking Water Foundation, *Our glacial perspectives, 2020*, is a permanent, public work of art located on Mount Grawand, in South Tyrol, Italy. A path leads along the mountain's glacial-carved ridge for 410 metres. Divided by nine gates spaced at intervals corresponding in scale to the durations of Earth's ice ages, the path marks out a deep-time timeline of our planet, of ice, and of the environment. At the end of the path is a pavilion made from multiple steel and glass rings that contain a circular deck jutting out over the edge of Mount Grawand.

Viewers standing on the deck can use the pavilion as an astronomical instrument by aligning their gazes with the surrounding rings, which track the apparent path of the sun in the sky on any given day. The rings divide the year into equal time intervals: the top ring tracks the path of the sun on the summer solstice; the middle ring tracks the equinox; and the bottom, the winter solstice. Each ring is itself split into rectangular glass panes that cover fifteen arc minutes of the sun's movement across the sky, making it possible for viewers to determine the time of day based on the position of the sun. On the outside of the pavilion, two parallel steel rings frame the horizon line, and the half-rings that support the structure indicate the north-south and east-west axes. The glass panes of the sun-path are tinted various shades of blue in reference to the cyanometer, a scale developed in the nineteenth century for measuring the blueness of the sky. The coloured glass filters and reflects light and solar radiation.

By marking the horizon, the cardinal directions, and the movement of the sun, the art-work directs the visitor's attention to a larger planetary perspective on the changes in climate that are directly affecting the Hochjochferner glacier. 'The artwork', Olafur Eliasson has said, 'acts as a magnifier for the very particular experience of time and space that this location affords – vast and boundless on the one hand, local and specific on the other. It is an optical device that invites us to engage, from our embodied position, with planetary and glacial perspectives.'

Materials

Steel, coloured glass (shades of blue), paint (black, white)

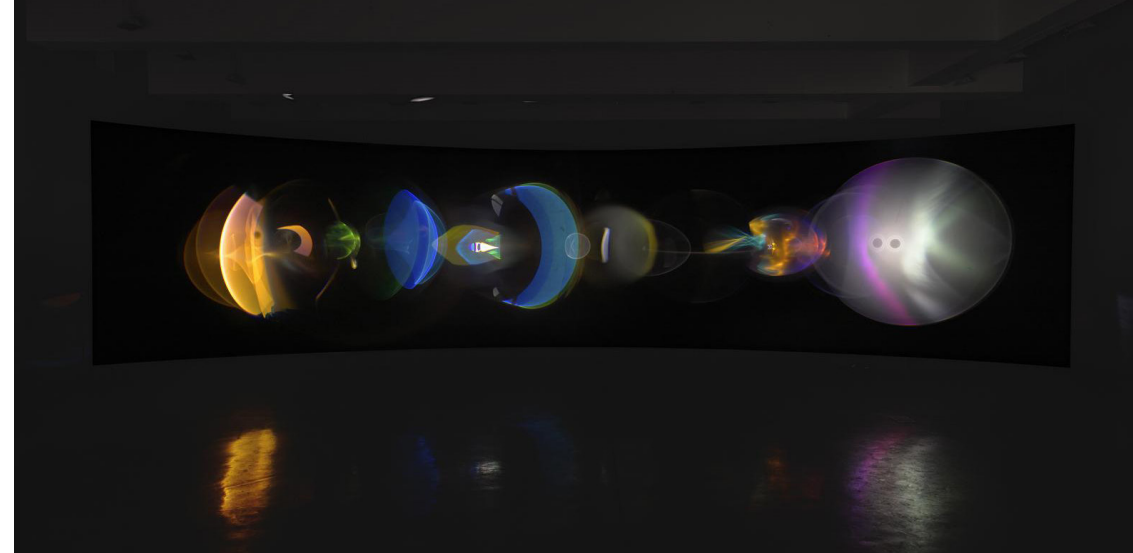
Colour experiment no. 108, 2020

In 2009, Olafur Eliasson began a series of circular paintings inspired by the idea of producing a new, comprehensive colour theory that would comprise all the visible colours of the prism. He began by working with a colour chemist to mix in paint an exact tone for each nanometre of light in the spectrum, which ranges in frequency from approximately 390 to 700 nanometres. Since those initial experiments, Eliasson has branched out to make a large number of painted works on circular canvases, known collectively as the colour experiments. A number of these works take their palettes from other sources, from historical paintings by J. M. W. Turner or Caspar David Friedrich, for example. In this case, the muted tones in the background were derived from the colours found in a photograph taken by the artist in Iceland in 2012. A formless multicolored explosion spreads out from the centre of the canvas, contrasting starkly with the smooth, even background.

Materials

Acrylic on canvas

Colour experiment no.108, 2020, Studio Olafur Eliasson, Photo: Jens Ziehe



Your ocular relief, 2021, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York, Photo: Tom Powel Imaging

Your ocular relief, 2021

On a curved screen in the darkened gallery, an evocative lightshow of ever-changing shapes, colours, and shadows, created through reflection and refraction of light, emerges and evolves. The sequence develops and vanishes in a slow continuum that is at once two-dimensional and architectural. The viewer, despite knowing that the shapes she is watching emerge are only light projections sees space and three-dimensional forms where there are none. Behind the screen, the viewer can glimpse the apparatuses that are responsible for the complex lightshow – an orchestra of lenses, prisms, mirrors, and colour-effect filters. Many of these lenses were languishing in storage at the studio, the leftover pieces from other artworks and experiments, before being retooled for this artwork. Motors turn the various elements within the spotlights, so that the movements unleash a sequence of distortions, reflections, and refractions on the screen. The resulting composition makes visible the physical phenomenon of light bending and splitting. Although the sequence repeats in a continuous loop, the abstract nature of the work makes it appear always new, beyond simple comprehension.

As inspiration for his projection works, Eliasson cites the experiments in film and photography of the early twentieth century by constructivist and expressionist artists like Hans Richter and Laszlo Moholy-Nagy.

Materials

Projection screen, aluminium stands, LED projectors with optical components, lens enclosures with integrated motors, electrical ballasts, control units

Life, 2021

From April to July 2021, anyone visiting the Beyeler Foundation can walk into the building at any time of day, for the exhibition is open twenty-four hours and there are no doors or windows keeping the world out. The landscape surrounding the building spills into the interior, flooding the gallery spaces with an artificially green pond in which a variety of aquatic plants thrive. Visitors may wind their ways through the exhibition along dark wooden walkways, accompanied by the ambient sounds of insects, traffic, and other people as well as the smells of the plants and water.

Views of the surrounding landscape, a publicly accessible garden, become visible as visitors progress through the gallery spaces. A number of possible routes allow visitors time to slow down, wander, and contemplate each of the subtly different spaces. The experience of the exhibition varies radically according to the time of day, with the water appearing bright green when the sun is out and glowing fluorescently at night.

Materials

Water, Uranine, UV lights, wood, plastic sheet, cameras, kaleidoscopes, common duckweed (Lemna minor), dwarf waterlilies (Nymphaea tetragona, Nymphaea 'Pygmaea Rubra', Nymphaea 'Ellisiana'), European frog bit (Hydrocharis morsus-rana), European water

Life, 2021, Fondation Beyeler, Photo: Pati Grabowicz





Mirror my calmness Buddha in me, 2021, Studio Olafur Eliasson
Photo: Jens Ziehe

Mirror my calmness Buddha in me, 2021

Colourful panes of silvered, handblown glass are arranged to suggest transparent, overlapping circles and ellipses. Eliasson has long been fascinated by the visual ambiguity created by the ellipse. This shape can appear either two-dimensional or as a circle viewed in perspective, depending on its context. For the last decade, Eliasson has been creating glass works and watercolours inspired by the themes of colour, transparency, and layering – the simplest means for achieving a non-representational illusion of depth and movement in two dimensions.

Materials

Silvered coloured glass (shades of gold, yellow, green, grey, blue, pink), aluminium

Projects, foundations and platforms

Studio Olafur Eliasson

The team at Studio Olafur Eliasson consists of craftsmen and specialized technicians, architects, archivists and art historians, web and graphic designers, film-makers, cooks, and administrators. They work with Eliasson to develop, produce, and install artworks, projects, and exhibitions, as well as on experimentation, archiving, research, publishing, and communications.

In addition to realizing artworks in-house, Eliasson and the studio work with structural engineers and other specialists and collaborate worldwide with cultural practitioners, policymakers, and scientists.

The studio hosts workshops and events in order to further artistic and intellectual exchanges with people and institutions outside the art world.

121Ethiopia

121Ethiopia was founded in 2005 by artist Olafur Eliasson and art historian Marianne Krogh Jensen. Based in Berlin, Copenhagen, and Zurich, the small, international NGO works to improve the lives and conditions of vulnerable children in Ethiopia.

121Ethiopia uses funds from the HEKLA Foundation to support carefully selected projects in Ethiopia. Through close cooperation with local partners in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, who also facilitate the daily work on the ground, 121Ethiopia is able to gain an intimate understanding of the Ethiopian context and maintain local ownership of the projects. We strongly believe that such collaboration is indispensable for the projects' successful and sustainable implementation.

121Ethiopia is committed to continuously reflecting on, rethinking, and adjusting our activities to accommodate the children's specific and current needs. We periodically bring in professional experts for quality assessment. This independent assessment helps our work stay constantly appropriate to its context and informed by recent studies, and it ensures that our projects maintain the highest possible quality and achieve their intended results.

121Ethiopia works to improve the lives and conditions of vulnerable children in Ethiopia. Our work focuses on children living in orphanages because they are in transition to permanent homes

and caregivers. Such physical and psychological transitions often put children in a state of severe stress, strain their psychosocial development, and require special care. Whether these transitions take place across short or long distances, they are lifelong processes that greatly influence the child's development. We therefore work to soften these transitions and reduce the stress caused by them, in order to lay a foundation for a safe, enjoyable childhood and the children's healthy lifelong development. All our projects aim to fulfil key aspects of this overall goal.

We work within the following areas:

Educating Caregivers

Through the 121 Caregiver Training Programme (CTP), we support the education of Ethiopian caregivers to ensure higher standards of childcare in orphanages. This programme helps the caregivers develop their knowledge, skills, and ability to continue learning, and become more sensitive and responsive to the specific needs of children in orphanages.

The training programme is based on the personal experiences of the participating caregivers. To make sure that the effects of the programme are lasting, it is organised in three stages: learning, bringing the knowledge gained into daily practices, and sharing it with other caregivers. The programme also reaches out to managers of orphanages, in order to build support and help the caregivers implement what they learn. 121Ethiopia began CTP in 2011 and continues to adjust and develop the programme to make sure it is appropriate to the context of Ethiopia.

Supporting Ethiopian Orphanages

Since 2005 we have collaborated with both private and state-run orphanages in Addis Ababa to establish safe, caring, and stimulating environments. This is crucial for children undergoing stressful transitions. We focus both on psychosocial aspects of childcare, such as daily caregiving routines and practices, and on physical improvements to the orphanages themselves through renovation of facilities.

We work to upgrade our partner orphanages through developing appropriate caregiving tools and practices. All of our work is based on close dialogue with the Ethiopian orphanages, with whom we exchange knowledge and inspiration.

Local Community Support

In two subcities of Addis Ababa, 121Ethiopia supports sponsorship programmes for local children and their families. These programmes help secure the children's schooling and overall well-being by giving the families financial support in the form of school materials, medical assistance, home visits, and counselling. Financial and medical support is also extended to local elders. These sponsorship programmes enable children to remain with their families and in their trusted environment, thus preventing the lifelong traumas and a sense of loss that dislocation may cause.

Exchange of Knowledge, Tools of Practice, and Skills

Through exchanging knowledge and information with experts and local partners, 121Ethiopia continuously works to improve and develop our approach and tools of practice to make sure our work is best practice. Furthermore, we aim to strengthen local partner institutions by transferring to them professional skills, information, training, and appropriate technology.

We feel a social responsibility for vulnerable children in Ethiopia, and we seek to live up to this responsibility through a child-first approach, where each individual child and his or her specific circumstances constitute our point of departure. We believe in, work with, and promote the use of high ethical standards.

121Ethiopia's Vision

121Ethiopia envisions a safe, healthy, and enjoyable childhood for vulnerable children in Ethiopia. We want to work towards this vision by training Ethiopian caregivers in methods for softening and reducing the stress of the transitions for the children and by providing safe, caring, and stimulating environments in Ethiopian orphanages.

121Ethiopia's Values

Always take the child's perspective;
Work through local partnerships and resources with respect for the local context;
Continuously share and exchange knowledge and tools of practice;
Create sustainable and lasting impact;
Encourage transforming thought into action.

Studio Other Spaces

Studio Other Spaces, founded by artist Olafur Eliasson and architect Sebastian Behmann in Berlin in 2014, connects art and architecture through works on interdisciplinary and experimental building projects and artworks for public space.

Seeking to expand the practice of architecture, we aim at finding experiment-based methods for designing space. Our involvement begins by analyzing the situation and results in the reality of the built project. This website reflects our approach to a holistic architecture practice: you can either view our work categorized by projects or sorted by perspectives, which include the multiple influences and trajectories.

Both paths show the same content, categorized and presented in two different ways.

Recent projects

The design of Lyst Restaurant in Vejle's Fjordenhus shows our experimental approach to a project. A reflection of the interconnectivity of all surrounding elements, basic raw materials are shaped by way of simple methods. The interior design, custom-made furniture and dining utensils were inspired by the restaurant's unique cuisine, complementing the fine dining experience by way of an unexpected design aesthetic.

As part of the reinvention of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery in Buffalo, New York, we designed Common sky, a sculpture that uses transparent glass and mirror reflections to modulate visitors' views into the trees of the park. The structure generates an ever-changing shadow pattern on the ground. This project forms a new public space connecting the existing Bunshaft Gallery, the surrounding park, and the new master plan and addition designed by OMA.

SOS has designed a permanent work of art for the 15th and 16th floor of the Morland Mixité Capitale building in Paris. And across the Mediterranean in Addis Ababa, the Meles Zenawi Memorial Park – a campus including five buildings and a park – is currently under construction.

Studio Other Spaces's first institutional solo exhibition 'The Design of Collaboration' at Kunst Meran Merano Arte in South Tyrol, Italy, was on display from September 2020 through January 2021. The show offered a tour through SOS's working methods and featured the studio's strong emphasis on collaboration.

Institut für Raumexperimente

The Institut für Raumexperimente e.V. (Institute for Spatial Experiments) developed out of the Institut für Raumexperimente, Berlin University of the Arts.

Since January 2015, the Institut für Raumexperimente e.V., a non-profit registered association (e.V.), maintains the institute's comprehensive online archive.

The Institut für Raumexperimente was affiliated with the Berlin University of the Arts from 2009 to 2014 as an experimental education and research project, led by its founding director Olafur Eliasson together with co-directors Christina Werner and Eric Ellingsen. It was supported with funding from the Senate Department of Education, Youth and Science of the State of Berlin as part of its programme of excellence Wissen schafft Zukunft (Knowledge Creates the Future) and grants from the Einstein Foundation Berlin. The institute was housed in the same building as Studio Olafur Eliasson, so that school and studio would mutually benefit from their respective activities, and the institute expanded the university into the broader city of Berlin.

One of the central tenets in the methodology of the Institut für Raumexperimente was to curate learning situations of uncertain certainty. These teaching experiments allow unexpected and surprising ideas and energies to emerge from within the unique micro-ecologies of international guests, practitioners, educators and scientists participating across an expanse of different disciplines. Collaborations with international universities, different institutions and manifold collaborators were central to these education experiments.

For the past five years the Institut für Raumexperimente has been building a methodological model for alternatives in art education. This model is not something to be imitated – not a model for mimicry and imitation, but rather is an activator, a cultural catalyst for the right here right now, a now that resonates in the rest of the world. The Institute's model allowed the unique micro ecologies and needs of the place or institution to shape their own direction.

The purpose of this education model has been to help think and work critically at the same time, and at the same time be organically grown into a particular place – for us Berlin – without excluding the rest of the world.



„The Institut für Raumexperimente is in itself an experiment. To me, the experiment as a mode of inquiry is necessary if we are to insist on a constant, probing and generous interaction with reality. Or to put it differently: by engaging in experimentation, we can challenge the norms by which we live and thus produce reality.

Due to its obsession with primarily formal questions, art education has, I believe, seriously failed to acknowledge the fact that creativity is a producer of reality. The hierarchical transmission of knowledge practised in many art schools is clearly unproductive: the inflexible categories of 'teacher' and 'student', working in a sealed-off environment, and the fundamentally unequal relation between the two, have taken responsibility away from the students, distancing them from real work in real life. But to study and to produce knowledge shouldn't imply a withdrawal from society.

There have, of course, been exceptions. Within the history of spatial research, educational experimentation has occurred at, for instance, the Center for Advanced Visual Studies at MIT, founded by Gyorgy Kepes and based on his engagement with the New Bauhaus School in Chicago; in the work of Joseph Albers and his teaching at Black Mountain College; in O.M. Ungers' 1960s classes at the Technical University in Berlin; at the Institut des Hautes Etudes en Arts Plastiques in Paris, founded by Pontus Hultén with Daniel Buren, Serge Fauchereau, and Sarkis; and in the work of other pioneers for whom life, individual engagement, and studies could not simply be separated. I aim to recast their radical notions of learning in contemporary society.

The educational alternative I hope to offer should provide tools for the creation of artistic propositions that have consequences for the world. We must embrace re-evaluation, criticism and friction. As we leave behind the representational distance cultivated by traditional art academies, a necessary and immediate relation to the world is forged.

Experimentation as a method not only informs my school, but also forms the core of my artworks and my Berlin-based studio.

In my understanding, an artwork is fundamentally tied to its surroundings, to the present, to society, to cultural and geographic determinants. It activates this dense texture, thereby examining the world in which we live – and by doing so, it can

ultimately change the world.

It also seems relevant to examine the pragmatics involved in the organisation of my studio, its randomness and roundabout ways. This reveals a structure that continuously invents the model according to which it proceeds. The practice I have developed makes me believe in my works and studio as agents in the world. And just as my works and studio participate in a continual exchange with their environment, with the times in which they exist, so too does the school. The Institut für Raumexperimente is not a discrete space; it is inseparable from its surroundings, from Berlin, from society and life in general. One might therefore call the Institute a logical consequence of my artistic practice.

At Institut für Raumexperimente, time and space are considered inseparable even at a methodological level. Space cannot be externalised; it isn't representational and nor are the experiments with which we work. To work spatially does not necessarily entail the creation of representational distance, and we can precisely avoid this distance, essentially static and unproductive, by insisting that time is a constituent of space. Or as a friend has said: space is 'a constantly mutating simultaneity of stories-so-far'.

To institute means to begin, and the school – cultivating consciousness of time – is about beginnings in space. I hope to establish a school of questions rather than of answers; of uncertainty and doubt. It is my firm belief that we can cultivate a relationship with these unstable modes of being, letting questions spawn new questions. Currently, it seems productive to acknowledge one's insecurity rather than progressing according to rationalised and standardised modes of understanding. By accommodating uncertainty, I think we strengthen our ability to re-negotiate our surroundings. Let me therefore suggest a principle: the success of a model lies in its ability to re-evaluate itself. It thus emerges that no artistic formula is waiting at the end of our inquiries.

Just as time is inseparable from space, so too is form from content. Art isn't a formal exercise. To me, duration, space, form, intention, and individual engagement constitute a complex whole whose performative qualities we should articulate and amplify. For this reason, our experimentation with experimentation as a format for producing art and knowledge will never focus solely on either form or content.

I hope the participants at Institut für Raumexperimente will

see the potential in our formation of multiple, simultaneous trajectories. To some, these trajectories will appear to be slow, to others fast, and it is precisely my aim to cultivate a high level of individual reflection. Ultimately the idea is to explore the notion of the school as a process. By doing so, we can hopefully circumvent the negative mechanisms of the current-day market economy: by commodifying our thought processes, this economy insists on a linear way of engaging with our surroundings, on linearity in our understanding of process and history. Marketability, consumption, and success are everything. The seductive virtue of a stable form lies in its conclusive nature, which in turn is a criterion for success.

This I find counterproductive to the friction that may allow art to exert influence in society today. To me, nothing is ever the same. Only in this way, by virtue of the experiment, can we co-produce society, making the voice of art heard. And, if it would only realise this, art has an incredible potential to evaluate the values ingrained in society. It can consolidate a non-normative platform and evoke a sense of community based on the fact that we are all different from one another. To define community in this way is the real challenge today.

The type of programme that we are trying to create at Institut für Raumexperimente is an unfolding macroscopic model of an aesthetic and social encounter. The life of the school will be dialogical, a multiplicity of voices. I hope the school participants – ‘teachers’ and ‘students’ alike – will enter the cacophony of voices that constitute its core. Giving and taking is equally distributed. Inspiration is for all. What we will produce in this encounter is reality. It will be a laboratory for experience, but probably nobody will see this experiment as being essentially a model until tomorrow.

Institut für Raumexperimente is an entirely public school, realised in collaboration with the Universität der Künste in Berlin. It is not an avant-garde school model in the classical sense, seeking a blind rupture with all previous systems, nor is it a private career-oriented educational scheme. Rather, we are supporters of slow revolutions. If crucial changes happen at a microscopic level, an entire society or worldview may in time be changed. And if our school experimentation succeeds, we will be able to sustain a non-dogmatic self-criticality as part of our everyday lives.“

„Five years of experimentation have passed through the minds and bodies of more than 400 people – including non-violent-communication experts, vegan cooks, composers, lawyers, philosophers, social scientists, astrophysicists, architects, poets, parkour and slacklining specialists, choreographers, artists, a deer imitator, a kung-fu master, and a politician.

All came to the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments) and made their mark as participants, teachers, friends. They became the Institut für Raumexperimente – ifrex in daily use – by charting out a path of questioning and learning that remained permanently under construction. The institute stayed, by design, a model of education in the making. No conclusive model ever arrived – we never wanted it to.

From 2009 to 2014 the Institute was based one storey above my studio in Berlin, but it went its own way. It was a cacophony of voices and encounters – and still is. The activities remain accessible at www.raumexperimente.net, an archival resource that we have made public to allow the accumulated thoughts and actions to move (us and you) into the future.

Generosity and inclusion were ideals for defining the modes of interaction at ifrex, ideals that I generally consider essential in art. Whereas other parts of reality often grapple with these terms, art inspires trust and accepts differences – of opinion, of expression. At the Institute, we wanted to stay open, to welcome the space that ideas, artworks, and people occupy; the demands on our time, attention, and senses that they make. We insisted that any new encounter, whether anticipated or unexpected, was potentially relevant and artistically valuable. We felt certain that embracing uncertainty was crucial to bringing critical material and thoughts to the table.

‘Contact is content’ is a phrase I recently picked up from the eco-theorist Timothy Morton. Touching something or someone is where content emerges – touching the ground, touching the city, touching another person.

An artwork’s potential lies not only in the object or in the concept; rather, it is located in the nature of the touch between object, people, and world. A fundamental skill to develop is our ability to understand the relationship between idea and action, thing and world; this is true of arts education and of life. It is about realising that there is no outside. We are all, inevitably, in the world, caught up in networks, entangled.

Producing art, working creatively, connects debates about personal and social values with (physical) forms. It is a form of doing. To make a sculpture, to walk in slow motion, to choreograph movement or to design a building is to shape reality. It means gradually giving ideas and values a body, giving them space – letting them space. It is a process of embodiment.

And embodiment – alongside reality production, inclusion, and trust – was one of the ideas guiding our work at the Institute. Such ideas accompanied us on packed three-day marathons, urban walks, and trips to Brazil, Ethiopia, Japan, Iceland, and China, and also while we were planning exhibitions and sculpting each semester with Eric Ellingsen and Christina Werner, the brilliant co-directors of the Institute, and me.

I encouraged the participants to ask themselves the most basic question: why? It may not be a question that can be answered in language, but I think there's a tendency to overlook the why of art making and the individual choices that it involves. I see why as the glue between the artwork and the world. It is what gives the artwork its status as a reality-producing machine; it highlights the agency of art in its various contexts. Most art schools teach as if creativity were about choosing between two colours or two materials, but to be creative is to see the consequences that the choice of colour or material has on and in the world.

The people who became the Institut für Raumexperimente were bound by a shared interest in the consequences of their artistic choices, in how creativity co-creates the world. We worked with the various systems of art, with how artistic ideas circulate, and what the contexts for making art are. Since these contexts are intimately connected with the artwork, they become part of it.

To expand our understanding of context, we organised a variety of events and experiments that took place on the actual street, in the city of Berlin, and at different locations around the world. The longest, most sustained excursion was our two-and-a-half-month residency in Ethiopia in the autumn of 2012, generously hosted by the Alle School of Fine Art and Design at the Addis Ababa University.

Addis Ababa, to me, is as much about life and art as any other city we might have chosen to visit. It is a vibrant space for living and thinking, for being with others and making art. And it is a place that I was certain would inspire us to question assumptions about the everyday. Addis did, indeed, offer the

means to reflect on and test the spatial and temporal dimensions of artworks, how they reach out into the world, how they unfold their social potential – that is, to reflect on and work with the performative qualities of artworks. In Ethiopia we did what we would otherwise do in Germany; we invited old peers and new friends and contributors to join us at our temporary home at the Alle School of Fine Arts and Design, hosted by its great team. Experiencing Addis was profound, but it was just as interesting to see Berlin from the perspective of being in Addis.

Whether in Berlin or Addis, society is a system constructed by us, its inhabitants; we all co-create it through use. Societies institute hierarchies, which create realities, but hierarchies are also negotiable. Reality is negotiable. In Addis, the former horse track, Jan Meda, became our test site for alternative encounters and models of knowledge production; in Berlin, the central field of Tempelhof, the old airport, became a meeting ground. The efforts made there, and throughout the five years of ifrex, linger on in the pages of our new book, titled TYT [Take Your Time], Vol. 6: Institut für Raumexperimente, 2009–2014; How to Make the Best Art School in the World.

Throughout the Institute's life, I downplayed the feeling of institutional hierarchy. It would be a mistake to think that my own way of being creative is a model for others to adopt; each participant had to find his or her own Umsetzung, or way of implementing artistic ideas. We first referred to everyone at the Institute as 'participants', later as 'practitioners'; everyone was already an artist. They were facing the same challenges that all artists encounter.

The most important thing was for the participants to gain confidence in what they do. Having confidence and believing that most everything is possible is a powerful driving force. In education, it is far more productive to make this felt than to teach crafts, skills, or career management. Our main approach at ifrex, therefore, was to teach from the participant's desires and to work on their behalf, not at their expense. This is why we derived the topics of our shared learning from individual projects rather than insisting on overarching themes. The curriculum was written at the end of each semester.

Creating confidence in the artists' personal trajectories and in the process that leads from idea to artwork contrasts with the somewhat destructive focus on criticism adopted by many art schools, and apparent in their selection processes,

represented by the 'crit' situation. Being disconnected from this machinery gave us a more positive, unpredictable perspective. I think some of the practitioners may have found me soft. At times I would feel that they were asking for direction, for a 'This is great!' or 'This will never work!' My effort lay rather in getting to the origin of the question they were asking, focusing on where the question was coming from.

Supporting the participants in developing their own view on why, and then how, was more important to me than giving opinions about the results of their artistic inquiries – the artworks.

Teaching at art schools should aim at enabling the participants to feel confident and inspired by the negotiability and instability of reality, comfortable with the fact that the world is full of risks and not predictable. When you accept that everything can change, it makes you incredibly strong as an artist; it is hard work because every time you do something, you have to reinvent the system and principles according to which you work. You have to reconfigure the present. There's no resort to formalism; there's no repeating successes. Being an artist means embracing relativity and uncertainty while maintaining precision.

I was lucky to work with an inspired – and inspiring – team. Christina and Eric trusted the potential of taking one day at a time; they trusted the quality that emerges from accepting both programmed and unexpected encounters while staying attuned to the subtleties of artistic creation.

And the team working with Eric and Christina shared the responsibility for developing the programme with them and with the Institute participants. Education was produced, not consumed.

Thank you to everyone for joining this uncertain journey."



Earth Speakr

Earth Speakr is an artwork. It invites kids to speak up for the planet and adults to listen up to what they have to say.

Earth Speakr was started by artist Olafur Eliasson and now takes shape with your input and ideas! Earth Speakr speaks your language – it also speaks the 24 official languages of the European Union and can be accessed throughout the world. Some aspects of the artwork are just for kids, aged 7–17.

If you're a kid, you can use the Earth Speakr app to record your ideas about the wellbeing of our planet. Adults are also invited to participate by listening to the messages, sharing these with others, and creating augmented reality Loud Speakrs to demonstrate with and amplify the powerful messages kids have to share.

Earth Speakr is created by Olafur Eliasson with his studio, kids, creative partners, and a group of researchers and experts, and was initially (2019-2020) funded by the Federal Foreign Office on the occasion of the German Presidency of the Council of the European Union 2020 and realised in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut.

Sometimes the river is the bridge

Eliasson is highly regarded for his efforts to advance sustainable development through his art, and this is reflected in the exhibition title. "Sometimes the river is the bridge is about a fundamental shift in perspective that allows us to see that which is not obvious, the invisible. In the face of the collapse of our planetary boundaries, there is an urgent need to redesign the systems in which we live, to re-engineer the future.

For that to happen, we need to reconsider fundamentally how we see everything. Up until now, we have organized our present based on the past; we now need to shape our present according to what we want from the future. The potential of this perspective shift is that it can help us reconsider the traditional idea of progress.", the artist states. His interests in renewable energy and climate action form an integral part of the exhibition.

Since the early 1990s, Eliasson (b. 1967) has built up a wide-ranging artistic practice that spans the fields of photography,

sculpture, drawing, installation, design, and architecture. Sometimes the river is the bridge features a representative selection of his works, many of which have never been seen before in Japan. This includes early and recent installations that use natural materials; sculptures that reflect Eliasson's long-held interest in light and geometry; photographic series; drawings and watercolours; and documentation of several of the artist's interventions in public space.

As a child Eliasson spent a considerable amount of time in Iceland, which led to his ongoing project of documenting the landscapes and natural phenomena there. His photographic work "The glacier melt series 1999/2019" (2019) makes tangible the shrinking of Iceland's glaciers over the last 20 years.

Influenced by our complex relationship to nature, Eliasson's installations often use natural phenomena – such as light, water and mist – to heighten our understanding of the way we perceive and co-produce the world around us. At MOT, visitors are invited to view the artist's earliest work in the exhibition, "Beauty" (1993), where a rainbow emerges in a darkened space. A major installations created specifically for the exhibition will utilize the cavernous space of MOT's atrium.

The activities of Studio Olafur Eliasson (SOE) are not limited to the production of artworks. Ideas and projects are developed through daily experimentation, collaboration and research. Sometimes the river is the bridge will integrate some of this process into the exhibition through a display of the studio's recent research into new sustainable and biodegradable materials as well as recycling techniques.

A comment by Olafur Eliasson:

„A work of art embodies a set of values and ideas. It reflects the artist's convictions – about sustainability and the climate, for instance. I think there has to be synchronicity between what art is about and how art is made. For me, today, this means working with my studio to change how my artworks are produced, shipped, and shared.

Sometimes the river is the bridge is our pilot project for making an exhibition in a sustainable way. One challenge was to get a number of artworks from Berlin to Japan while keeping the carbon footprint down. To do this we sent them on an unusual journey. The artworks travelled first by truck from Berlin to Hamburg. And then by train to Taicang, China, via Malaszewicze, Poland, and Zabaykalsk, Russia.

Once they arrived at the port of Taicang, they were loa-

ded onto a ship to Japan. Each crate had a drawing machine attached to it that recorded the movements of the train and the ship along the way. And so the journey became a part of the exhibition: Memories from the critical zone (Germany–Poland–Russia–China–Japan, nos. 1–12). The exploration of the centre of the sun, 2017, was brought from South Korea by ship and is powered by solar energy. Solar panels also power the Little Sun lamps that you can use to make Sunlight Graffiti. The alternative and sustainable materials on view in the exhibition are part of ongoing research at my studio. For me, they represent the future.

All human activities have a carbon footprint. Individuals, however, can only do so much. Governments and the international community need to get ambitious about climate action now. But to make this happen, we all need to be active in our own fields and at all possible levels. Now is the time to act on behalf of the planet.“

The glacier melt series

In 1999, artist Olafur Eliasson photographed several dozen glaciers in Iceland as part of his on-going project to document the natural phenomena of the country; this particular series of photographs formed a work called The glacier series.

Twenty years later, Eliasson decided to return to Iceland to photograph the glaciers again.

A new work, The glacier melt series 1999/2019, brings together thirty pairs of images from 1999 and 2019 to reveal the dramatic impact that global warming is having on our world.

The glacier melt series 1999/2019 is on view as part of the exhibition In real life – at Tate Modern, London, through 5 January 2020 and at Guggenheim Bilbao from 14 February to 21 June 2020; it is also on view in an exhibition at Reykjavik Art Museum from 28 November 2019 to 9 February 2020.

„In 1999 I travelled to Iceland to document a number of the country's glaciers from the air. Back then, I thought of the glaciers as beyond human influence. They were awe-inspiring and exhilaratingly beautiful. They seemed immobile, eternal.

I was struck at the time by the difference between the human scale and the scale of geo-history. For me a glacier or a rock seem solid, but on the geological scale, rocks and glaciers are constantly in motion.

This summer, twenty years later, I went back to photograph the same glaciers from the same angle and at the same distance. Flying over the glaciers again, I was shocked to see the difference. Of course, I know that global heating means melting ice and I expected the glaciers to have changed, but I simply could not imagine the extent of change. All have shrunk considerably and some are even difficult to find again. Clearly this should not be the case, since glacial ice does not melt and reform each year, like sea ice. Once a glacier melts, it is gone. Forever. It was only in seeing the difference between then and now – a mere twenty years later – that I came to fully understand what is happening. The photos make the consequences of human actions on the environment vividly real. They make the consequences felt.

This August, I joined a group of people to commemorate the passing of Okjökull, the first glacier in Iceland to vanish entirely as a result of human activity. It was a humbling experience. A plaque laid at the site bears an inscription, drafted by the Icelandic writer Andri Snær Magnason, that poses a question to future generations: 'We know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it.'

I hope that we have now reached a turning point. We have a responsibility towards future generations to protect our remaining glaciers and to halt the progress of global heating. Every glacier lost reflects our inaction. Every glacier saved will be a testament to the action taken in the face of the climate emergency. One day, instead of mourning the loss of more glaciers, we must be able to celebrate their survival.“

Ice Watch

Immense blocks of ice, harvested as free-floating icebergs from a fjord outside Nuuk, Greenland, stood from 11 December 2018 in a grove of 24 blocks on Bankside, outside Tate Modern, and in a ring of 6 blocks in the City of London, outside Bloomberg's European headquarters, until they melted away.

Each block of ice weighed between 1.5 and 6 tonnes. Fished out of the Nuup Kangerlua fjord, they had already been lost from the ice sheet and were melting into the ocean. The Greenland ice sheet loses 10,000 such blocks of ice per second throughout the year; fishing these blocks of ice from the sea did not affect the quantity of ice in Greenland.

Ice weight: 110 tonnes

Origin: Nuup Kangerlua fjord outside Nuuk, Greenland

Transport: Organised by KVK Consult, the ice was collected by divers and dockworkers from the Royal Arctic Line and then shipped in nine refrigerated containers from Nuuk to Aalborg, Denmark, and then to Immingham, UK, where it was loaded on to trucks and brought to London.

Carbon Footprint: Studio Olafur Eliasson partnered with Julie's Bicycle to understand and minimise the environmental impacts produced by Ice Watch; a full carbon footprint will be produced on completion of the project.

History

London is the third location of Ice Watch. The first instalment opened in 2014 in front of Copenhagen City Hall to mark the publication of the UN Fifth Assessment Report on Climate Change by the IPCC. In 2015, Ice Watch Paris, at the Place du Panthéon, accompanied the 2015 COP 21 talks that led to the Paris Agreement.

A comment by Olafur Eliasson

„The blocks of glacial ice await your arrival. Put your hand on the ice, listen to it, smell it, look at it – and witness the ecological changes our world is undergoing. Feelings of distance and disconnect hold us back, make us grow numb and passive. I hope that Ice Watch arouses feelings of proximity, presence,

and relevance, of narratives that you can identify with and that make us all engage. We must recognise that together we have the power to take individual actions and to push for systemic change. Come touch the Greenland ice sheet and be touched by it. Let's transform climate knowledge into climate action."

Green Light

Green light – An artistic workshop is a project by the Danish-Icelandic artist Olafur Eliasson, initiated in collaboration with Thysen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary, Vienna (TBA21).

Conceived in response to the present challenges arising from mass displacement and migration, the project shines a green light for asylum seekers, refugees, and migrants and encourages civic engagement.

At the core of the project is a fundraising campaign, supported by donations given in exchange for Green light lamps. Members of the Green light community have supported with their donations the work of our partnering NGOs: Emergency and Caritas.

The Green light lamps are attractive, sustainable LED lamps produced in a collaborative artistic workshop by refugees and visitors. Each Green light lamp consists of a wooden frame made from European ash, nodes of 100 percent recycled PLA, twine made from used plastic bags, cable ties of 100 percent recycled nylon, and a green LED. The lamps come in eco-friendly packaging.

Green light – An artistic workshop is now closed, and Green light lamps are no longer available. We thank everyone who contributed and supported the cause of Green light.

A comment by Olafur Eliasson

"Green light is an act of welcoming, addressed both to those who have fled hardship and instability in their home countries and to the residents of the cities receiving them."

SOE Kitchen 101

Chef Victoria Elíasdóttir and artist Ólafur Eliasson warmly invite you into this space for eating and thinking, for food experimentation and impromptu encounters. Inspired by the menu and the atmosphere of the Studio Olafur Eliasson (SOE) Kitchen in Berlin, Elíasdóttir and the SOE Kitchen 101 team are taking advantage of the harbour location and the Icelandic resources, serving a locally-sourced pescatarian menu combined with vegetarian recipes popular with the Berlin studio team.

A number of artworks by Ólafur Eliasson, old and new, that incorporate materials harvested from the shores of Iceland are installed in the restaurant.

You are cordially invited to join the program of events, which includes music, talks, family activities, and art, and is open to all.

Events

Guests are warmly invited to stay after dinner at the restaurant, or to come specially for our series of events, which range from dinner concerts and performances to talks and family workshops.

The event program will host a wide range of activities, choreographed by Daniel Björnsson and Christina Werner, with input and participation from Studio Olafur Eliasson, i8 Gallery, Mengi, Institut für Raumexperimente, the Iceland University of the Arts, Kling & Bang, the Living Art Museum, and other local initiatives.

The Studio Olafur Eliasson Kitchen

The SOE Kitchen team runs the kitchen at the studio of artist Ólafur Eliasson in Berlin. Four days a week, the team prepares organic, vegetarian meals that are shared by the full 100-person studio team as well as guests and collaborators who happen to be visiting at the time.

The kitchen provides sustenance, a healthy diet, downtime, and social glue. It was established in 2005 at Eliasson's former studio on Invalidenstrasse, Berlin, run by Asako Iwama and Lauren Maurer. Since then, Lauren Maurer has continued to be a core member of the team, alongside Christine Bopp, Montse Torredà Martí, and Nora Wulff. The SOE Kitchen has grown in scale and ambition, driven by the interests of the cooks, who have backgrounds in dance, theatre, film, and art, as well as



gastronomy. Between 2009 and 2014, the kitchen team often collaborated with the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments, raumexperimente.net) on food experiments, and they have continued to engage in research on cooking practices and food preparation. In 2016, they launched the series Studio Kitchen Tastes. At these events, experiments and research into topics like fermentation and microorganisms are presented and shared with the rest of the studio team over lunch.

The SOE Kitchen team collaborates with the biodynamic farm Apfeltraum, located just outside of Berlin, and has conducted research trips to, among other places, a fermentation lab in Copenhagen and le potager de la reine, an experimental garden behind the scenes at the Palace of Versailles.

SOE.TV

SOE.TV is a platform for moving images by Studio Olafur Eliasson, Berlin. The site offers glimpses into the experiment-based, research-driven work at the studio and the activities of SOE Kitchen, as well as documentation of Eliasson's artworks, architectural projects, and exhibitions.

A new series called Studio Visits features friends and collaborators from diverse disciplines – such as a specialist in terraforming, a philosopher, a former UNDP manager, a chronobiologist, and a choral conductor – sharing insights from their fields of expertise.

SOE.TV also includes archival footage of workshops, events, and symposia hosted by IfREX, the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments).

As the site grows, it will become a home for a broad set of ideas that resonate with the studio's areas of concern. These include the role of art and culture in society today, solar energy, climate action, migration, and sustainable cooking, as well as the worthwhileness of collaborative work, of undertaking tasks with no clearly prescribed outcome, and of feelings of trust and social cohesion.

Little Sun

Little Sun started as a simple idea to create a small, portable, solar lamp for people living without electricity in Ethiopia. We began as a social enterprise, selling solar devices around the world with the aim of raising funds to make solar lights and chargers available in energy-impooverished rural communities in Africa at affordable prices, where they could also provide a clean alternative to toxic and expensive fuel-based lighting.

The organisation was founded in 2012 by the contemporary artist Olafur Eliasson, and Frederik Ottesen, an engineer – an artist and a problem solver who look at the world from different perspectives. This spirit of searching for new and unconventional paradigms, of challenging old belief systems to find new solutions to intractable problems, is baked into our DNA. We believe that every person has the power to change the world with their passion, creativity, and ingenuity, and that everyone has a role to play in changing the world for the better.

Our programs in Africa are just the beginning of what we can accomplish with your help. Together we can:

Create thriving communities powered by solar energy;
Reduce climate injustices;
Transition to a world powered entirely by renewable energy.

What we do:

The impact of access to even the smallest amount of electric light has proven transformative. Since 2012, Little Sun has grown into a global project that has changed millions of lives through the distribution of over 1.2 million personal solar devices to students, refugees, teachers and community health workers. This has enabled 58 million additional study hours for children, and saved households \$150 million in expenses and helped reduce CO2 emissions by 800,000 metric tons. By working with local entrepreneurs, Little Sun has also helped create thousands of local jobs, and generated local profits for rural communities in Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly for women.

But as we listened to our partners, sales agents, and friends in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Senegal, Rwanda and Zambia where we operate, Little Sun quickly realized that energy is more than the provision of light. Energy is critical to almost everything a com-

munity needs to improve their quality of life, standard of living, and health.

Access to energy makes it possible for people to build a thriving economy. Energy makes it possible to increase agricultural production by mechanizing equipment, and to build adequate health services with refrigeration for medicines, and modern equipment for lab tests.

Access to energy allows students to study at night and improve their chances of graduating and getting higher paying jobs.

If communities who currently live in almost total darkness are going to increase their per capita income, modernize their infrastructures, and mechanize manual labor to increase productivity and profits, they need access to affordable energy. And since the world is on the verge of a climate disaster, it makes sense that this energy is clean.

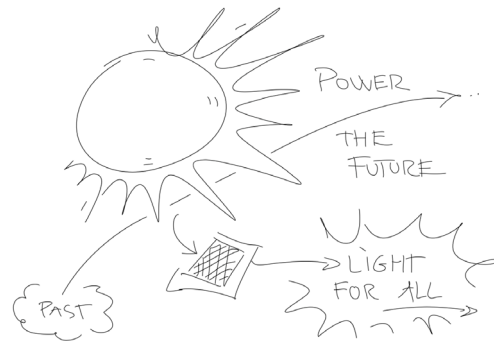
Little Sun has expanded operations to meet the unmet needs of communities in rural Africa where we work.

We are now improving farmer efficiency with solar-powered farm equipment, installing cold storage units to reduce food wastage and increase farmer's incomes, designing solar irrigation systems that allow farmers to produce more crops, and fabricating solar-powered egg incubators to dramatically increase hatching rates for baby chicks.

In response to the COVID crisis, Little Sun is equipping thousands of front-line healthcare workers with solar phone chargers so they can better meet the needs of rural patients. We are also bringing solar systems to rural health facilities in Senegal and Ethiopia to help power diagnostic equipment and vaccine storage and support maternal health.

All of these new programs have the power to transform almost every aspect of the lives of people living in the rural communities in which they are being implemented. But Little Sun is more than just the productive use of electricity. Little Sun stands for a thriving world powered by the sun.

We are committed to telling the story of solar. We are committed to using the power of our voice to move the world towards clean energy. We do this by partnering with artists and creative leaders to inspire global action to overcome climate change and create a world powered by renewables. Our goal is to reach millions of people to join together in bringing light to the world.



We still run our social enterprise business to fund some of the work we do in Africa, but we also formed a non-profit entity to help raise additional funds to bring our vision of a solar powered world to fruition.

Where we work:

We work primarily in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Senegal, Rwanda and Zambia, drawing on the expertise of in-country staff. Through close partnerships with local organizations, we also work in Nigeria, Tanzania, Kenya, and South Africa. We have offices in New York, Berlin, Addis Ababa and Lusaka. Little Sun is registered as a non-profit in the United States as well as in Germany.

Interview about little sun

On the 28th of July 2012, the same period as the Olympic games, was launched the new work of Olafur Eliasson's: Little Sun at Tate Modern, in London. Little Sun is an invitation to look at the art pieces located in the museum in the dark and through just the light of the artist's special solar-powered lamps.

People could live this experience from the end of July on, during the so called "Tate Blackouts", basically Saturday night museum's openings after regular visits hours when for two hours lights are off and people can go around the Tate's Surrealist collection galleries using only the provided lamps. A work of art, but also something more: a project that is part of a wider campaign aiming at raising awareness about solar power, the importance of light for life and the global energy issue and challenge we are currently facing. As Eliasson himself explains: " Little Sun responds to the situation we face today, since natural resources no longer abound: energy shortage and uneven energy distribution; it makes it necessary to reconsider how our life-sustaining systems function. I see Little Sun as a wedge that opens up this urgent discussion from the perspective of art".

Little Sun was developed in collaboration with the Engineer Frederil Ottesen. Technically, the body of the lamp is made of plastic and has a diameter of 12 cm, a depth of 3.2 cm and a weight of 120 g. The solar panel on it is a mono crystalline one of 0.5 Watt and with a surface of 60x60 cm. The lamps are able to provide 5 hours of light after a charge in the sun of 5 hours.

It is true that two of the main elements of Eliasson's arts have

always been social participation (also in terms of interaction, use of public spaces and raising of social awareness) and the dialogue with the natural environment. The artistic act, in an exemplary project such as Little Sun, can become a call for action and social/environmental engagement, as the artist once more declares: "In everyday life, it is important that we critically engage in global initiatives and local contexts. Our actions have consequences for the worlds."

Considering the entirety of Eliasson's artistic production, the use of light in works such as "Little Sun" and for instance "Your Black Horizon" is however completely different from the one in "360° Room for all Colours". The idea of visibility is always questioned, in two different directions. In the work "Your blind passenger", the viewers have to use a sense other than sight, while in the first mentioned works, sight is the main source of perception. What is challenging in a work such as Little Sun is the fact that view, through arts, bridges concepts and awareness, in the direction of a wider social participation. Access to global events and sharing of primary needs are also questioned.

In particular the Studio witnesses the willing of a broader collaboration with specialists in different fields, since Eliasson participated several times in projects where architects, engineers, craftsmen, geometry theorists are involved. Among the main outcomes of this kind of collaborations we mention: The mediated Motion, Serpentine Gallery Pavilion, The Blind Pavilion and *Chaque matin je me sens différent, chaque soir je me sens le même*.

We all know the Danish-Icelandic artist mainly for his installations, sculptures and large scale works realized with natural material like water, light, mist, air and their enhanced spatial environments. His works, often presented in public spaces, are often questioning the perception of space and time dimensions of nature within an ecological context, always in a participatory way.

Among his main projects we already mentioned The Weather Project, realized in 2003 as part of the Unilever series. This installation basically consists in several humidifiers, placed in the open space of the Tate's Turbine Hall, producing a fine mist made of sugar and water. On them, a semicircular disc composed by several monochromatic lamps creates a single-frequency yellow light. On the ceiling big mirrors are installed where the visitors could see themselves in a suggestive mixed reflection of coloured lights and shadows.

All these are acts of the same desire to participate and incorporate arts in public, urban and cultural environments as if they simply were "spaces", where men are constantly asked to respond

in terms of responsibility, both creative and social, being both of these dimensions part of our human reality. In order to discuss this ideas and projects – and in particular his last work Little Sun – we contacted Olafur Eliasson for a short interview.

Silvia Bertolotti: What are the main projects you are working on with your team at the Institute for Spatial Experiments?

Olafur Eliasson: Actually, the Institut für Raumexperimente (Institute for Spatial Experiments) is not a team who works for me or with me. It is an experimental form of arts education, which is not based on the hierarchical transmission of knowledge that is normal in school. The institute should rather provide tools for the creation of artistic propositions that have consequences for the world, with the practitioners actively involved in the world.

Silvia Bertolotti: Could you quickly explain to us how your Studio is structured in terms of team, organization and work?

Olafur Eliasson: Since 1995, when I established my studio in Berlin, it has slowly expanded to a team of about 60 people: craftsmen, specialised technicians, architects, artists, geometers, archivists, art historians, two cooks, and administrators. They work with me on experiments with materials and phenomena, and help to develop, produce, and install artworks and exhibitions. I also have a team that concentrates on archiving, communicating with the press, and contextualising my work. We've produced a series of in-house publications, *Take Your Time*, and a series of events called *Life is Space*, which I periodically host at my studio and which feature experiments, presentations, discussions, and talks by a wide range of guests from many fields.

Silvia Bertolotti: Let's talk about "Little Sun", which is your last work, also presented during the Olympic Games this year. How did you get the idea for creating this project?

Olafur Eliasson I first began discussing ideas for Little Sun two years ago together with my friend Frederik Ottesen, a Danish engineer and strong believer in sustainable technology. He was working on a solar plane at the time, and I was peripherally involved in its design. We were tossing ideas around, speaking about light and energy access. It fascinates me that light has such an evident functional and aesthetic impact on our lives. It determines what we do and how we do it. Many of my works revolve around light, how daylight and artificial light influence what we see and feel, as in

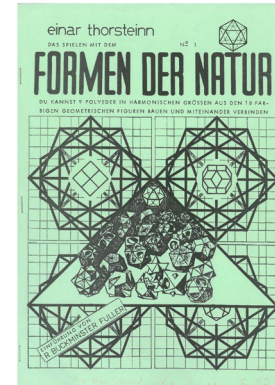
works like *Room for one colour* (1997), where I lit a white room entirely with yellow, monofrequency lamps that reduce the viewer's colour spectral range to yellow and black, or *Lichtdecke Kandinsky* (2006), where the lighting in a gallery of Kandinsky paintings in the Lenbachhaus in Munich was altered to simulate the lighting conditions in various geographical locations at different times, thus exploring how the changing daylight affected visitors' perceptions of the works.

You could say that I examine light as phenomenon within an art context, showing my experiments in galleries and museums. But for some time now, I have had the urge to work with light in a more ambitious way; to work with it in a way that is integrated into the world. There are 1.6 billion people around the world who have no access to an electrical grid, who rely on expensive and harmful kerosene lanterns for lighting. This is why Frederik and I have developed *Little Sun* as a solar-powered lamp. What is interesting about solar energy is that it takes something that is for all of us – the sun – and makes it available to each of us.

Silvia Bertolotti: I think *Little Sun* is mostly about the raising of awareness about the energy issues and also about public accessibility to the main source of life: light. But also art. Is that correct? Are we missing other points that you'd like to underline?

Olafur Eliasson: It's important to mention that *Little Sun* is a part of a broader campaign to improve energy access and that it is based on a business model that is unlike that of traditional businesses. We aim to drive profit to the point of greatest need by maximising the earnings of people in off-grid communities who will sell the lamps. By creating sustainable businesses in off-grid regions, *Little Sun* can bring about real change. The way we are doing this is also by appealing to people in areas of the world with ready access to electricity to buy a lamp. By buying *Little Sun* here, you help make it available for a lower price to people who do not have electricity or who only have inconsistent electrical coverage.

Timeline of Publications



*Das spielen mit dem
Formen der Natur
1977 – Artist's booklet*

*Users
1998 – Artist's book*

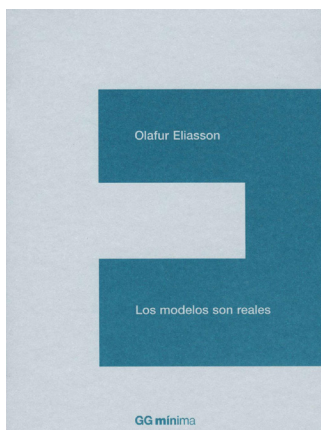


*Surroundings Surrounded: Essays
on Space and Science
2001 – Exhibition catalogue*

*Olafur Eliasson,
Jokla Series, 2004
2005 – Magazine*



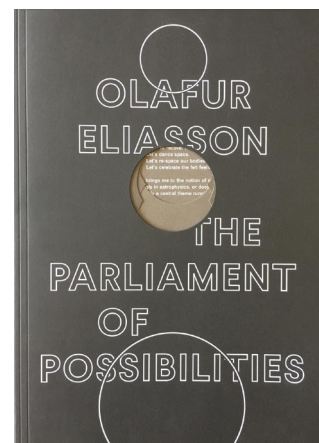
Los modelos son reales
2009 – Artist's book



Den trekantede himmel
& Lava floor
2013 – Exhibition catalogue



Olafur Eliasson:
The Parliament of Possibilities
2016 – Exhibition catalogue



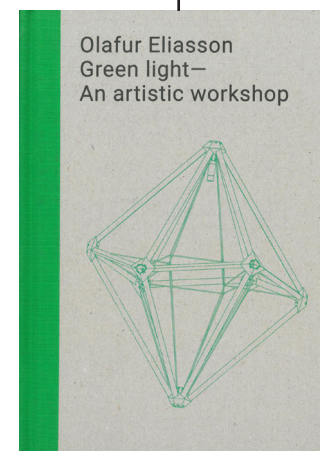
Olafur Eliasson: In Real Life
2019 – Exhibition catalogue



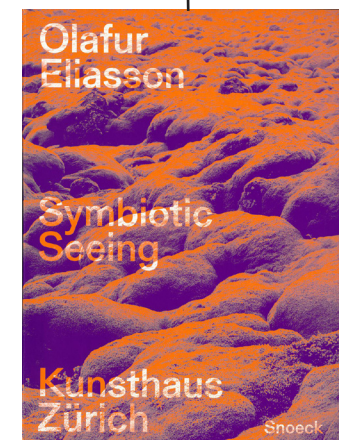
Never Tired of Looking
at Each Other – Only the
Mountain and I
2012 – Artist's book



Time-Sensitive activity
2015 – Exhibition catalogue



Olafur Eliasson: Green light – An
artistic workshop
2017 – Book



Symbiotic seeing
2020 – Exhibition catalogue

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2020

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Olafur Eliasson: (Y)our future is now. Exhibition catalogue. Serralves Museum of Modern Art, Porto, Portugal, 2019.

2018

Olafur Eliasson: Recalibrating the senses in Oudenburg. Exhibition catalogue. Foundation De 11 Lijnen, Oudenburg, Belgium, 2018.

Olafur Eliasson: The unspeakable openness of things. Exhibition catalogue. Red Brick Art Museum, Beijing, China, 2018.

Olafur Eliasson: Reality Projector. Exhibition catalogue. Marciano Art Foundation, Project Series Issue no. 2, Los Angeles, USA, 2018.

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2017

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