

Take your time: Olafur Eliasson

Olafur Eliasson is an artist who transforms our experience of the space around us. Born in Denmark in 1967, of Icelandic parents, he draws upon a range of visual and conceptual forms in his art. In this, his first survey exhibition in Australia, Eliasson presents us with thirty works from 1993 to the present which encompass sculpture, installation, photography, and a 'model room' with diverse objects including maquettes and prototypes for his larger works. Fashioned in wire, cardboard, wood and other materials, the objects offer insight into the artist's thought process and working method.

This exhibition was generated by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art and has since travelled to New York, Dallas and Chicago. The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney, is the only Australian venue for the exhibition. As with each previous venue, the exhibition has been carefully revised and expanded specifically for our audience, and in response to our gallery spaces, working in close collaboration with the artist and his studio in Berlin.

Take your time: Olafur Eliasson takes the form of a visual journey, in which viewers move from light-filled open spaces through immersive, built structures. Individual works find inspiration in the distinctive landscape of Eliasson's ancestral country; theories of colour and perception; and the recent history of art and its shift from physical object to idea or sensation. Drawing careful attention to the ways in which we perceive the world about us, they invite us to become active agents in the creation of meaning, rather than passive observers. Eliasson says, 'I see the potential in the spectator – in the receiver, the reader, the participator, the viewer, the user'.

Participation is central to Eliasson's practice, and the exhibition invites viewers young and old to take part in the creation of a vast white LEGO metropolis, entitled *The cubic structural evolution project* (2004). This work is constantly changing as it is built up, added to, pulled down and re-built every day during the course of the exhibition. This is the first time the work has been seen in Sydney, and it represents a major addition to

the exhibition from an Australian public collection. New work has also been brought in from the artist's studio to augment the Sydney exhibition, in the form of nine large photogravures depicting colour wheels. These delicate works on paper may be seen as two-dimensional counterparts to some exhibited sculptural works, with their subtle investigations of chromatic shift and variation.

This exhibition takes as its starting point a glowing yellow room entitled *Room for one colour* (1997), comprising mono-frequency bulbs that are attached to the gallery ceiling. As our eyes adjust to the intensity of the yellow light we become aware of a retinal after-effect that produces the sensation of purple, or even black, as we look back out to the galleries beyond. *360° room for all colours* (2002) takes a different approach to colour. It features a ten-metre circular enclosure that bathes viewers in an ever-changing glow, as concealed fluorescent lights move through the colour spectrum.

Other works in the exhibition experiment with light and shadow, transparency and reflection, through the use of mirrors and glass, as well as light projections. *Sunset kaleidoscope* (2005) penetrates the building itself, in the form of a kaleidoscope through which we can view the ever-changing world outside. Five photographic suites, each comprising a grid with multiple images, depict the artist's travels in Iceland, documenting its unique land forms above and below ground, its waterways and horizon. Nature also finds expression in works that harness organic materials such as water and arctic moss. Eliasson has used water in various states, from liquid to solid, in his art. The vast, vertical work *Moss wall* (1994) unites the languages of nature and culture within the museum. Concluding the exhibition, a further work *Beauty* (1993) comprises a thin veil of water or mist, illuminated obliquely by spotlights which produce a soft, hazy rainbow effect.

Text by Rachel Kent, Senior Curator,
Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

Education & Public Programs

PUBLIC PROGRAMS

In conversation: Olafur Eliasson and Madeleine Grynsztejn, curator of *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*
Thursday 10 December,
10.30–11.30am

A unique opportunity to hear one of the world's leading contemporary artists talks about his work in the exhibition *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson*. Madeleine Grynsztejn is the Pritzker Director, MCA Chicago. Includes exhibition entry.

\$30/\$25 MCA Members & Concession
Bookings essential

Auslan Tour
Saturday 6 February
11.00am–12.00noon

Join an Auslan-interpreted tour of *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson* to look at Eliasson's practice and key themes.

FREE
Bookings essential

Colour Theory
Saturday 6 February
2.30–3.30pm

Dr Zena O'Connor, Honorary Associate with Environment-Behaviour Studies Research Group, University of Sydney and lecturer in Colour at COFA discusses colour theory in relation to Olafur Eliasson's work.

FREE with exhibition entry

Floor Talk
Sunday 21 February
2.30–3.30pm

MCA Senior Curator Rachel Kent leads a tour of the exhibition *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson* and looks at Eliasson's practice and the works in the exhibition.

FREE with exhibition entry

Workshop: Up Periscopes
Wednesday 16 December
6.00–8.00pm

Artist Will French leads an adult workshop making periscopes and diorama. Inspired by and responding to Olafur Eliasson's work using prisms and colours it will provide a unique view through which to see the exhibition. Includes tour of exhibition.

\$20/\$15 MCA Members & Concession
Bookings essential

KIDS & FAMILIES

Kaleidoscopic Fun
Thursday 21 January
10.30am–2.00pm
5–7 year olds

See the world like Olafur Eliasson and use light, colour and shape to create your own magical kaleidoscopes. All materials and entry into exhibitions included. Bring your own lunch.

\$30/\$25 MCA Members
Prepaid bookings essential

SCHOOLS

Secondary Study Morning
Thursday 25 February
11.00am–1.00pm

An in-depth insight into the themes and key works in *Take your time: Olafur Eliasson* followed by challenging educator-led tours.

\$15 per students (includes exhibition entry)
Teachers free
Bookings essential

YOUTH

Generationnext 2010 launch
Supported by the Balnaves Foundation
Sunday 28 February
6.00–8.00pm

FREE
For 12–18 year olds

This popular, free program connects teenagers with contemporary art and culture. After-hours generationnext events are linked to MCA exhibitions and designed with input from a Youth Committee of enthusiastic, volunteer teenagers. generationnext events are supervised by MCA Learning staff. generationnext. talk art. eat food. listen to live music. no teachers. no parents.

RSVP: Essential by Thursday 25 February
02 9241 7196 or generationnext@mca.com.au

Cover Image:

Olafur Eliasson
Beauty (detail) 1993
Spotlight, water, nozzles, wood, hose, pump
Dimensions variable
Installation view at Hara Museum of Contemporary Art, Tokyo, 2004
Photo: Jens Ziehe
Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles
© 1993 Olafur Eliasson

Take your time: Olafur Eliasson

Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney

10 Dec. 2009 – 11 Apr. 2010



Take your time: Olafur Eliasson is organised by the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Lead support was provided by Helen and Charles Schwab and the Mimi and Peter Haas Fund. Generous support was provided by the Bernard Osher Foundation, the Barbro Osher Pro Suecia Foundation, and SFMOMA's Collectors Forum. Additional support was provided by Patricia and William Wilson III, the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

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TAKE YOUR TIME
OLAFUR ELIASSON
Museum of Contemporary Art

Exhibition Guide

1. *Inverted Berlin Sphere* 2005

Stainless steel, mirror, bulb, and dimmer. Collection of Martin Z. Margulies, Miami
Light radiates out through the lamp's reflective components, altering your experience of the space.

2. *Room for one colour* 1997

Monofrequency lights. Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and neugerriemschneider, Berlin
Monochromatic bulbs emit light at such a narrow frequency that they affect your normal colour perception, making the contents of the room appear in yellow or shades of black.

3. *The cubic structural evolution project* 2004

White LEGO bricks and wood. Queensland Art Gallery, Brisbane. Purchased 2005, Queensland Art Gallery Foundation Grant
Three tons of white LEGO bricks are spread over a long table at which visitors are invited to create and develop their ideas. Models made by each person are modified and elaborated by subsequent visitors throughout the course of the exhibition.

4. *360° room for all colours* 2002

Stainless steel, projection foil, fluorescent lights, wood, and control unit. Private collection, courtesy Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York

Since the nineteenth century, painted panoramas have given viewers a sense of what it feels like to stand in faraway landscapes or participate in historic events. Rather than illustrating a particular scene, however, Eliasson's installation immerses you in the colour spectrum itself.

5. *Remagine* 2002

Spotlights, tripods, and control unit. Collection Fonds national d'art contemporain, Ministère de la Culture, Paris

Seven spotlights cast shifting, overlapping rectilinear patterns across a gallery wall, creating the illusion of depth.

6. *One-way colour tunnel* 2007

Stainless steel, colour-effect acrylic, and acrylic mirrors. Collection of the Art Supporting Foundation to the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art
This prismatic tunnel generates a kaleidoscopic effect that fluctuates as you move through the passageway.

7. *Sunset kaleidoscope* 2005

Wood, steel, colour-effect filter glass, mirrors, and motor. Collection of John and Phyllis Kleinberg

Installed in an open window, this kaleidoscopic box both creates and distorts a view of the outside world, commingling mirrored images of it with reflections of a rotating yellow disc.

8. *Yellow versus purple* 2003

Colour-effect filter glass, spotlight, tripod, motor, wire. Tate, purchased with funds provided by the 2003 Outset Frieze Acquisition Fund for Tate 2003

As a white spotlight shines on a rotating glass disc, complementary purple and yellow projections are cast on the surrounding area.

9. *The grey colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

10. *The black colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

11. *The white colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

12. *The yellow colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

13. *The red colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

14. *The blue colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

15. *The constant colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

16. *The double constant colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

17. *The triple constant colour circle* 2008

Colour photogravure. Courtesy of the artist; Niels Borch Jensen Galerie und Verlag, Berlin; neugerriemschneider, Berlin; and Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York.

The colour circle series consists of nine circles, each made up of 24 equidistant hues. Divided into three parts, the circles use shared colour samples in a series of colour experiments.

18. *Model room* 2003

Various mixed-media models, maquettes, and prototypes. Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

This collection of objects provides a glimpse into Eliasson's creative process, showing how he and his collaborators use the studio as a laboratory for investigating diverse materials and forms.

19. *Crystal stone wall series* 1996

Thirteen gelatin silver prints. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, fractional and promised gift of James and Dana Tananbaum

20. *The aerial river series* 2000

Forty-two chromogenic prints. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, gift of Helen and Charles Schwab

21. *The horizon series* 2002

Forty chromogenic prints. Collection of Michael and Jeanne Klein, partial and promised gift to the Menil Collection, Houston

22. *The Domadalur daylight series (south)* 2006

Forty-two chromogenic prints. Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

23. *The inner cave series* 1998

Thirty-six chromogenic prints. Collection of Ruth and Carl Pite

24. *Mirror door (user)* 2008

25. *Mirror door (spectator)* 2008

26. *Mirror door (visitor)* 2008

Spotlights, tripods, and mirrors. Courtesy of the artist, Tanya Bonakdar Gallery and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

Spotlights aimed at rectangular mirror doors create pools of light on the gallery floor as well as in the artificial dimension within the mirrors.

27. *Moss wall* 1994

Wood, moss, and wire. Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

A hidden wood-and-wire structure anchors live reindeer moss to the gallery wall. Throughout the duration of the exhibition, the curtain of soft moss alters in shape and colour, giving off a natural fragrance.

28. *Multiple grotto* 2004

Stainless steel. San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, Accessions Committee Fund purchase

Traditional kaleidoscopes use angled mirrors to create complex visual patterns. Each cone in this walk-in version is based on a unique crystalline pattern found in nature.

29. *Soil quasi bricks* 2003

Fired compressed-soil tiles and wood. Courtesy of the artist; Tanya Bonakdar Gallery, New York; and neugerriemschneider, Berlin

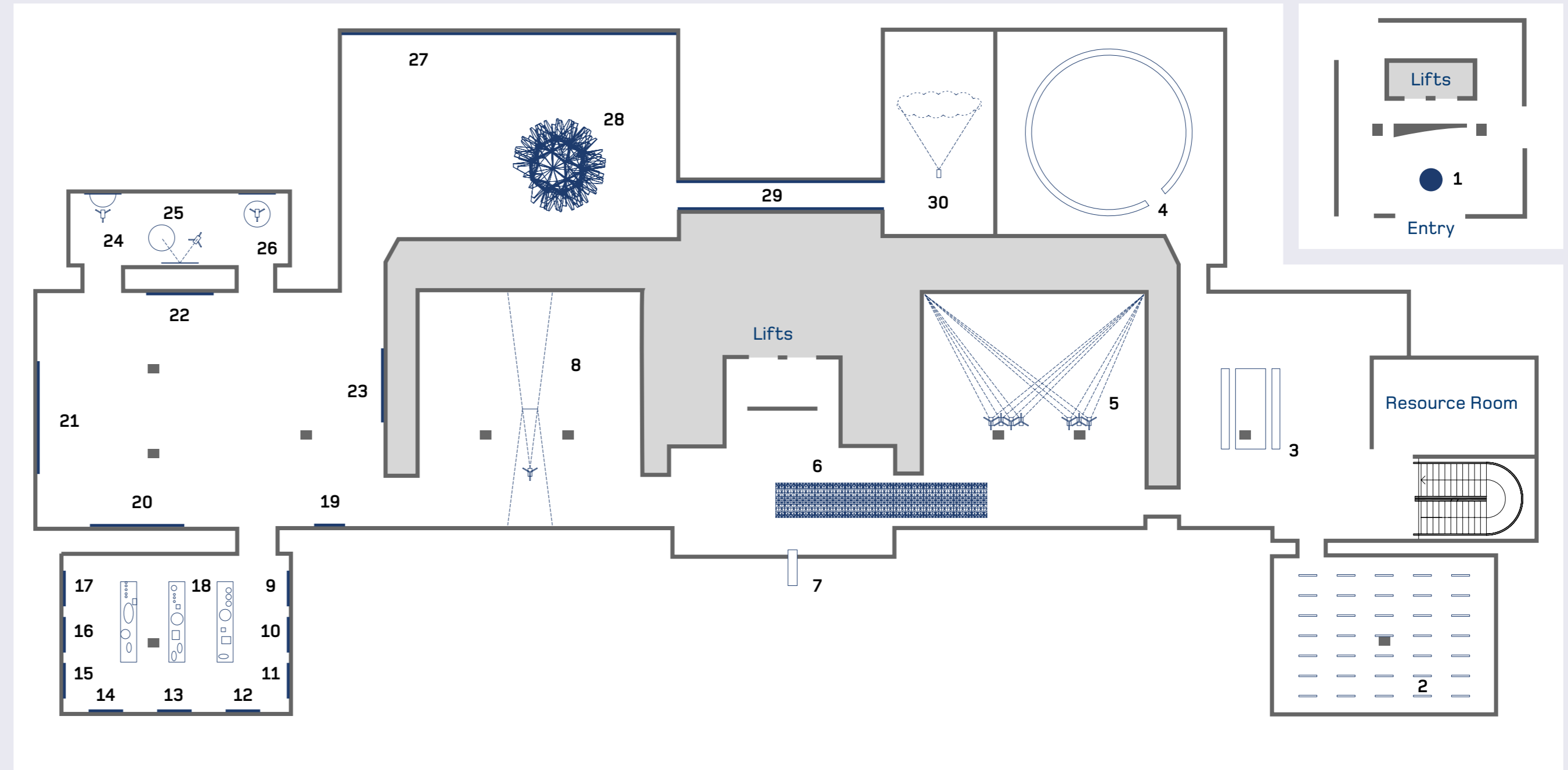
The space is lined from floor to ceiling with hundreds of hexagonal earthen tiles.

30. *Beauty* 1993

Spotlight, water, nozzles, hose, wood, and pump. Museum of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles, purchased with funds provided by Paul Frankel

A spotlight shines obliquely through a curtain of fine mist, creating a rainbow. Your experience of the visual effects is generated by the intersection of water and light and varies in relation to your viewing position within the room.

Level 3, Galleries



Level 1, Entrance